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ANNA BORDEN'S
CAREER

MARGARETE MÜNSTERBERG

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**ANNA BORDEN'S
CAREER**

A NOVEL

BY
MARGARETE MÜNSTERBERG



**NEW YORK AND LONDON
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1913

TO ELLA

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY	I
II. THE YOUNG ENGLISH DIPLOMAT	14
III. MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA	40
IV. THE TRAINED NURSE	63
V. ANNA AS NOVICE	84
VI. BENVENUTO LUGINI	97
VII. MISS LILY SPANGLE	131
VIII. COLLEAGUES	172
IX. JOHN BRUCE	205
X. THE TOILERS' BROTHERHOOD	242
XI. DAILY BREAD	262
XII. THE OLD GLAMOUR	287
XIII. THE SNEER OF THE WORLD	319
XIV. THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER	329
XV. THE MISTAKE	348

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

CHAPTER I

AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY

AND I propose a toast to the Ambassador's niece, who has made this season in Berlin one that we can never forget, who since her arrival in September has been a most benign and stimulating hostess at her own house and the soul of every festivity that she attended, who has brought from America the grace and the spirit of enterprise that enchants the European and has inspired us, like a successful diplomat, with admiration for her country. I drink to the health of Miss Anna Borden!"

The enthusiastic army-captain raised his champagne-glass, and this gesture was followed by the irregular, yet spontaneous rising of the forty-nine dinner guests at the ten sparkling tables, with shining glasses in forty-nine hands. Anna Borden, alone, remained seated. When the German Emperor, the President of the United States, the American Ambassador and his wife, the distinguished American visitors at Berlin, including her father, had been toasted in turn, she had not expected this final homage to herself. However, there was no time to meditate now; for she had to rise and bow to the speaker, whose seat was at her own table, and touch her glass with successive musical tremors to the glasses of her

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

neighbors and a number of eager guests who were crowding round her chair.

"Thank you, thank you!" cried Anna, bowing graciously to right and left. "You spoil me—you overwhelm me—how have I deserved this?"

When the wave of toasting and complimenting had receded, Anna whispered to her partner, a young Secretary at the English Embassy:

"Can you account for all this? The season isn't nearly over yet; there is all February crammed with dances and dinners still before us, and father and I have not the least intention of sailing home before April. One would think we were going to leave Berlin to-morrow. Can you account for it?" she repeated.

"I can account for it only," replied Kenneth Holcombe, the young English Secretary, "in the same way that I account for my giving up a planned visit at my sister's in England during my short vacation,—because I knew that I should meet you here to-night."

Anna laughed up at her companion.

"Confess!" she challenged him. "The prospect of idling in the country bored you. You could not stay away three days from the whirl without longing to be back. You love the whirl! Now don't protest—I know you, Mr. Holcombe!"

"Ah, but you forget where we met first," returned the young diplomat. "Last August—how the sea-gale howled and the gulls screamed over us. We were quite out of the world then."

"Scheveningen you call out of the world!" Anna exclaimed. "With all its tinselly buildings, and its high-heeled and powdered sports sipping iced tea on the pavilion to the tinkle of the eternal 'Bacarolle' with their

AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY

backs to the sunset. I understand your idea of seclusion."

"Now don't spoil my jewel of a reminiscence!" responded the young diplomat. "When I think back of Scheveningen, I see only you and the sea."

"—and Mrs. Hamilton!" added Anna, as a stately, shrewd-eyed lady with a double chin and a magnificent star-shaped diamond brooch swept past them. The company was now rising.

"She has an inborn knack for destroying tête-à-têtes," said Kenneth following the majestic apparition with his keen blue eyes.

"I don't understand why father enjoys her conversation so much," said Anna confidentially. "I believe we are going to cross on the steamer with her again. I could never force myself to like her even a little. You never met her daughter Natalie—she was in Switzerland that summer—but she is here to-night. I never could lavish any tenderness on her either—still, you may like her. There she is! I will introduce you."

"Spare me!" he protested, with a beseeching gesture. "I do not want to meet any other girl. We have not even talked over 'The Lady from the Sea' at the Lessing Theater. Are you going to 'Tristan' to-morrow? We shall soon be behind if we don't talk events over in chronological order."

"My dear Mr. Holcombe," said Anna in mock-serious tone, opening her arms as though she would embrace the whole company that was now sauntering into the old-rose drawing-room. "I have my duties. After this kind toast, I must at least try to deserve my reward. I must devote myself to the company."

"Am I not a part of the company?"

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"A fiftieth!" Anna exclaimed, smiling at him lightly over her shoulder, and sailed forth toward the chattering groups.

"Oh, Anna!" A tall, startlingly handsome girl pulled Anna by the sleeve.

"What is it, Natalie?"

Anna could not help observing at one glance the perfection of Natalie Hamilton's intricate lace gown and elaborate coiffure with the brilliant-studded combs, of the round pearls in her ears that set off her faultless cold face.

"Won't you introduce that fascinating young Englishman to me?" Natalie asked in a tone that was meant to sound casual.

"That is just what I wanted to do," said Anna and presented Kenneth Holcombe who stood smoking on the threshold of the smoking-room, idly watching the company, to the dazzling beauty. When Anna had finished the introduction, she slipped into a deserted corner of the room and, leaning against the back of a high armchair, lapsed into a reverie, while voices buzzed without cease. She did not know why a whiff of melancholy had blown across her festive spirit since her contact with Natalie. It could not be that she envied Natalie's beauty, for Anna knew that she herself received enough homage; nor was she afraid that the handsome damsel's impression on Kenneth Holcombe would be too great, after Natalie had begun to open her proud lips. No; it was the emptiness, the soullessness of that cold, correct beauty that chilled Anna whenever she saw it; she felt that she was more than Natalie, that hers was a warmer, greater soul. But how could she prove this supposition? Did she, Anna Borden, not spend her winter months in exactly the same

AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY

way that Natalie spent hers—at the opera, at dinners, at teas, at dances, possibly at a few more museums in the morning!

"I wonder why everybody—young and old—is raving about Miss Borden?" said a shrill voice behind Anna. "She isn't as handsome as—Miss Hamilton, for instance. Is she very clever?"

Anna started out of her negligent poise. "That serves me right," she scolded herself, "for dreaming about my own precious soul instead of minding my business!" And she plunged headlong into a group of army officers, steering straight upon the captain who had selected her for his toast.

"Oh, I must thank you!" she cried out with effusion.

"For what?" he replied. "For speaking my mind?"

Anna spoke English to the jovial captain, who had traveled in England, but she addressed the lieutenants round her in German, and flushed from the pleasure of talking a foreign language with increasing fluency and from the agreeable atmosphere due to the dashing, suave attentions of her military companions. Some she had known before, some she had met to-day for the first time; she enjoyed all with equal zest.

"Whether I am ever homesick for America?" she was saying to a lively little lieutenant with an incipient blond mustache. "The truth is, I have not time for homesickness. And, besides, I cannot bear to look back. I like to look forward—always forward to new thrills!"

"Bravo!" said the little lieutenant. "That is right. Now I will follow your example and forget my disappointment because I could not sit at your table to-night, and will look forward to the Reichskanzler's ball next Tuesday——"

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"Ah, the Reichskanzler's ball!" interrupted another lieutenant, a big martial figure. "But shall we not see you at the opera to-morrow? Gala-performance—the whole court—'Tristan'—you must be there!"

Anna, before she answered, played with her pearl pendant, and drew the gauzy, opalescent scarf over her bare shoulders, while she glanced leisurely from one pleasantly excited face to another.

"I shall hold a reception in our box between the first and second acts," she said finally. "But, mind you, not after the second; after the second act of 'Tristan' I—I am simply carried away!"

"And after the third act," said a fiery captain of Dragoons, "you go to Hiller's and enjoy a festive supper."

"Not at all!" said Anna with mock disdain, as she fastened the narrow gold hoop that gleamed in her heavy dark hair. "I go home directly, and try not to step for a moment out of my fine ecstasy. Between the first and second acts—remember!" She made a sweeping bow, and included the whole military group in a mysterious farewell glance.

As she turned around, her eye fell upon the dark little wife of the French Ambassador, who was yawning in an armchair behind her tinsel fan. Anna glided toward her.

"Ah, Miss Borden!" The little Ambassador's wife whisked up her lorgnette and looked critically at Anna's long, heavy gown of dark green velvet. "You are still the Parisian! Now confess, are you amusing yourself as well this winter in Berlin as last year in dear Paris?"

Anna answered the French question in French, which she spoke without effort and without the adventurous

AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY

thrill that she still felt when she conversed in German. "I will tell you truly, Madame. In Paris I felt quite Parisian; in Berlin I feel perfectly Teutonic."

"Ah, you are a cosmopolitan, my dear Mademoiselle," said the dapper lady with a sigh. "But how about America?"

"Oh, I am always American at heart," said Anna, with genuine enthusiasm.

"Are you quite sure of your heart, my child?" said the wife of the French Ambassador, with a little slap of her fan and a mischievous glance at the uniforms that gleamed near by. "It may be anything but American sometime. Beware!"

Anna shrugged her shoulders and laughed. Two stately old gentlemen walked up to the French lady and begged her to introduce them to Miss Borden; one Anna recognized as the Minister of Finance, a haggard, severe-faced man, the other was a general, brilliant with innumerable decorations. Thrilled as she realized that these distinguished old men were eager to meet her, Anna gave each her hand solemnly with a full expressive glance of her large, black eyes—a silent greeting which she had consciously adopted in Europe.

"I saw you at the English Embassy a week ago," said the General. "But had no opportunity to meet you. However, a young secretary there told me who you were—ah, there he is coming toward us! Do you know his name?"

"Mr. Holcombe," replied Anna, with a humorous smile at Kenneth, who was approaching them with an air of impatience.

"I have met Miss Borden now at last," said the General to Kenneth, who bowed respectfully and listened

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

in resignation for ten minutes to the banter of the French woman, the Prussian dignitaries and Anna.

"So you should like to spend the next winter in Japan," the Minister of Finance was saying.

"Yes, I delight in contrasts!" Anna replied in a lyric tone. "Paris and Berlin are contrasts, to be sure—but what subtle ethereal contrasts! And think of the real contrast between the Mongolian civilization and ours."

"Then the North Pole would do as well if you merely want contrast," said the General.

"No, the North Pole is too lonely for Miss Borden," Kenneth remarked. "She needs live creatures to amuse her—and I believe Eskimos are taciturn."

Just then the French Ambassador came to lead away his little wife, and the Prussian dignitaries bowed and departed, leaving Anna with Kenneth in a deserted corner of the room. The dark old-rose drapery in an old copy from a Murillo painting blended with the portières and rugs of the same warm shade. Dark, richly stained glass shades mellowed the electric lights, and candles in tall silver holders added a festive glow. Anna sank into a low armchair and rested her eyes on the soothing beauty of her surroundings.

"I positively forbid you," said Kenneth, taking a chair beside her, "ever to inflict another of your boarding-school acquaintances on me!"

"Oh, were you so bored with Miss Hamilton?" said Anna blandly. "I am sorry. By the way, why did you accuse me, a minute ago, of not liking solitude? What do you know about it?"

"Oh," said Kenneth lightly. "I merely said that to revenge myself on you for what you said about me and Scheveningen. And, besides, why should not we both

AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY

merit the same reproach—if it be a reproach at all? And does that not suggest an idea to you?"

"No," said Anna spitefully, in defiance of a certain adventurous light that kindled in her companion's eyes.

"But it does to me," said Kenneth, stubbornly unexplicit. Anna knew well enough what the idea in question was, a general, vague idea about the affinity of their souls; but she felt that these moments which she was breathing away in the low armchair, surrounded by mel-low old-rose and tempered lights, were too delightfully languid for any undue display of emotion.

"Let us talk about something cool and abstract!" she said while she fanned herself with her spangled toy.

"You cannot!" her companion returned. "Nothing that passes your lips remains abstract; it becomes tinged with you—it turns to fire!"

Anna laughed lightly up at the somber Murillo picture on the wall, and let silent moments glide by at ease. Meanwhile, her companion studied her capricious yet exquisite face with its glowing black eyes and its delicate lips that seemed never at rest even when silent, its crown of thick, shadowy hair that gave the skin beneath it the tint of ivory, and decided that it must be the most distinguished, the most thrilling subject for a great painter. Nevertheless, he did not like to see her face at rest—it was too much like the suspense before the curtain rises at a play—and he wished that she would speak.

"I saw a Manet at the National Gallery this morning," she said gayly, "that fascinated me. It was an insipid garden-scene with a woman sitting blandly on a bench and a man standing inanely behind her. But it was all in green—a restful summer afternoon—oh, so charmingly insipid, and so cool and green—like a cucumber!"

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"I remember the picture," said Kenneth. "I remember disliking it especially. Coolness and blandness do not fascinate me."

"Nor me either—in life," Anna replied; "but in a frame: just a cool moment framed!"

"You are much too fond of moments," said Kenneth, with playful sternness. "I think you would like a necklace of fine crystallized moments!" His eyes fell mechanically on Anna's pearl pendant and the delicate gold chain round her frail throat.

"Ah, you have guessed it!" she cried and rose with a capricious slap of her fan against the arm of his chair. "And now this moment of rare tête-à-tête by candlelight is over, and I must go and join my poor father. He will be looking for me!"

"Before you see your father, I must tell you——" cried Kenneth, following her.

"What?" Anna raised her eyebrows in suspense.

"While you were talking with the officers, after Miss Hamilton left me, your father asked me to join you in your box at the opera to-morrow."

"Indeed!" Anna did not conceal her surprise.

"That was very kind of your father—was it not?" said Kenneth in response to her surprise.

"Yes, I think it was," said Anna, with a mischievous toss of her head. "Then good-by till the overture!"

She gave him her hand hurriedly and whisked out of the room.

During the swift motor-ride over the smooth asphalt through the brilliantly lighted city, Anna's father was in high spirits.

AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY

"You were in your element to-night," he said, not without a tinge of pride in his deep voice.

"Yes, I was," answered Anna. "But no more than I have been every night for the last month."

"Should you like to keep it up forever?" her father asked mysteriously.

Anna laughed.

"Why are you asking that now, when we have so much of the season still ahead of us? Of course frolics like these can't possibly go on forever. Besides—just what do you mean by 'it'?"

"International society," said her father tersely, just as the motor-car was swinging through the old Brandenburg Gate into the radiant international parlor street of the city, Unter den Linden. One moment later they stopped before the Hotel Adlon, and retired from the flux of chattering women and attending men in evening dress to their own secluded drawing-room, fragrant with the faint, mingled scents of violets and gardenias.

"International society!" Anna repeated dramatically what her father had said on the way, as she threw off her wrap and paced, half dancing, up and down the room. "It is thrilling! But I suppose it can last only a season."

"But you might stay here another season," said Mr. Borden calmly from his armchair.

"Oh, would you stay here another winter?" asked Anna, unconvinced.

"No, you can't expect me to sacrifice my mills to my daughter another year——"

"Your mills?" asked Anna, raising her eyebrows.

"Yes," said her father with a frown of worry. "That John Bruce is prowling around again."

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"John Bruce," said Anna slowly. "When did I hear that name? Not in the last two years surely——"

"Why, John Bruce, the fanatic labor-leader! Don't you remember, three years ago," said Mr. Borden gravely, "when my men were beginning to strike, how John Bruce came and stirred them up with his inflammatory speeches in the town-hall and on the Common? He was a tiger. We nipped the strike in the bud that time, but Bruce has been gaining power since."

"You don't mean," said Anna alarmed, "that your men are striking again?"

"No, not yet," her father replied, "but that Bruce has hurled his fire-brand into the Gilmore and Pertersen paper-mills, and the flames may spread to mine any day."

"Oh, father, don't worry about the things that might be," responded Anna, who disliked the thought of American business in the midst of her European pleasure. "Besides, I don't see what you mean by my staying here if you won't stay too, after all the ado you made over how unhappy you were last year while I was in Paris. And besides, Aunt Sarah was with me then, and she wouldn't spend another winter abroad."

"Oh, I wouldn't think of letting you stay here alone, or with Aunt Sarah either," said Mr. Borden with an air of finality, and hid his face behind the evening paper.

Anna continued to sweep up and down the room, glancing now and then at the newspaper that screened her father. She knew what he was thinking. In fact, her father seldom mystified her, for Anna knew him better than most children of her acquaintance knew their fathers, because ever since she was left motherless in her

AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY

thirteenth year she had been called upon, more or less, to fill the vacancy left by her mother. Aunt Sarah, to be sure, had been the head of the household and had also nominally been given the task of educating her; but the dear old aunt, who was waiting at home in Boston for her niece and her brother to return, had never asserted her gentle will power over Anna's free spirit.

"It is time to go to bed!" said Mr. Borden, and rose briskly.

Anna stood opposite her great, imposing father, whose profile somewhat resembled Savonarola's and whose black eagle eyes marked the organizer and commander.

"Father!" she cried in triumph, clasping her hands jauntily behind her head, so that she looked as though she would soar away. "I know what you were thinking of when you spoke of my staying here another season without you, but not alone, and yet not with Aunt Sarah."

Mr. Borden smiled severely.

"You were thinking——" Anna went on. "By the way, I hear you have asked Mr. Holcombe to go in our box to-morrow night!"

CHAPTER II

THE YOUNG ENGLISH DIPLOMAT

ANNA absorbed the gay scene round her with a consciously keen sense of delight. The floor beneath her seemed a brilliant mosaic of men in dress-suits or gleaming uniforms and women dazzling with jeweled necks and elaborate head-dresses. In the boxes women were leaning over the railings in graceful poses, fanning themselves or bending with correct graciousness toward their gesticulating escorts—and over all hovered the suspense of waiting till the Imperial family should appear in the great, festively illumined central box. Anna did not even mind that Mrs. Hamilton, resplendent in her gold brocade, was staring at her from the opposite box through an opera-glass, or that Natalie, in spite of her proud correctness, was obviously gossiping about her to the Lieutenant at her side. After all—why should they not stare at her, why should they not talk about her? She was, indeed, a proper, integral part of this festive scene, with her pearls and her spangled, wine-colored scarf, and her escorts—she felt with a delicious satisfaction—had the most distinguished presence of all the sparkling world round about: her great, commanding father, and the blond young English diplomat who sat in the rear seat languidly watching the company—the most elegant, the most aristocratic, the most charming of men!

THE YOUNG ENGLISH DIPLOMAT

All at once the whole company rose, with heads turned toward the Imperial box. The Empress, tall and majestic, sparkling with her gala jewels, entered first; then the Emperor, followed by the Crown Princess, the Crown Prince, one of the younger Princes and the rest of the suite. Their Majesties and the Imperial family bowed to right and left, and smiled upon the enthusiastic house.

Anna herself was throbbing with excitement.

"Sometimes I fear that I am a traitor to my Republican soul," she whispered to Kenneth Holcombe. "I detect a passion for royalty in a corner of my heart."

"Bravo!" replied Kenneth in a subdued voice. "I approve of that, for I am a complete Royalist at heart. I am the humble servant of a king."

The lights were turned off; a hush spread over the whole house, even the Imperial box, and there arose the first strains of the overture to "Tristan and Isolde."

When the curtain had fallen on the first gorgeous act, Anna whispered: "I love this music above all!"

"I do, too," Kenneth replied. "Not only the music—the whole opera—the old story as well."

"It is a simple story," mused Anna.

Her father had stepped into a neighboring box to greet an acquaintance; she and Kenneth were together alone in the buzzing, stirring house.

"Yes, it is a simple story," Kenneth replied, with enough wistfulness in his voice to make Anna keenly aware of the exquisiteness of the moment. "It is simple and elemental. But it is too old to be hackneyed, and too universal to bore."

Anna grew pensive; the house was rather quiet now, for the Imperial guests had left their box and most of the audience had gone out into the foyer, so that her box

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

in the opera-house seemed as fit a background for intimate discourse as any more secluded retreat.

"After all—" she said in a veiled voice, gazing absently at the rococo scene on the curtain, "after all, why do we talk in blasé tones of 'old stories' simply because we have heard them often, when they are nevertheless strange and wonderful surely, because they would crush us completely if they ever came within our experience?"

"That is true," said Kenneth. "We applaud love and death alike at the theater."

There was a moment's silence, and Kenneth went on: "Yet I believe that not even the most art-loving listener can help thinking of his own life when he hears life represented in story or song or play. And I cannot help being glad that there is not always a King Mark or a demoniac love-potion, but that some loves are unhindered, free——"

The curtain behind them was drawn back violently, and two lieutenants broke into the peace of Anna's box.

"You said that you would receive after the first act," said the more imposing of the two rather apologetically, after both had bowed blandly. Anna, while she introduced them to Kenneth, cursed the moment in which she had invited these intruders.

"Gorgeous music!" said one of the lieutenants.

"Enchanting," replied Anna.

In that moment, Mr. Borden returned with the American Consul-General, a jovial man, and there followed introductions and chattering in German and English, till the curtain rose over *King Mark's* garden, and the lieutenants had to scramble to their seats in the dark.

After the second act, the intermission was short, and

THE YOUNG ENGLISH DIPLOMAT

Anna walked round in the foyer with Kenneth, while her father was escorting Mrs. Hamilton. Anna bowed to her acquaintances mechanically, still throbbing in response to the music.

"It is too bad that there is only one act more," she said to Kenneth.

"Yes," he replied, with kindling eyes. "When I live through a fine hour, I like to stretch it out, as it were, into eternity."

"Yes, so do I," said Anna eagerly. "But not an hour—a moment. Rare moments I like to hold fast—unless, to be sure, I expect the next moment to be still finer."

Anna met Kenneth's youthful, ardent glance and doubted whether the next moment would be more charming than the one in which she was breathing now. She felt no violent suspense, for it was quite clear to her that the young diplomat loved her, and his subtle tributes were more delightful than an open confession.

During the third act, Anna knew, though she kept her eyes on the stage, that Kenneth was watching, half of the time, not *Tristan* and *Isolde*, but her. Anna was not displeased, and when the last deep chords had faded away, and the bright electric lights briskly conjured romance into reality, she observed with satisfaction that his aristocratic face, usually so calm, was surprisingly tense.

"I must beg you one favor," he whispered, as he helped her into her wrap.

"What is it?" she asked, and she felt an exuberant gayety surge up within her, in spite of the solemn music that was still vibrating on her inward ear.

And Kenneth asked with as much passion as became the correct young Englishman: "After this—may I call you Anna?"

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"Henceforth you shall call me Anna," she declared with mock solemnity, and as the exuberant gayety rose and flooded her spirit she exclaimed, with a mischievous laugh and a playful toss of her head, "and, if you like, you may even call me Isolde!"

Then, fearing that he might interpret this outburst too seriously, she turned abruptly away, and hurried toward Natalie to ask her, with unwonted solicitude, if she, too, had enjoyed the opera. Anna did not speak to Kenneth again that night, except in her father's presence, and they were soon parted in the cold night air outside, to the unmusical accompaniment of cabmen's shouts.

The next day, toward noon, Anna was lounging in her apartment in a rather irritable mood, after her return from a horse-back ride in the Tiergarten with Natalie. The ride in the brisk morning air had been a pleasure, to be sure, but Natalie's conversation had been far from exhilarating. She had told Anna in elaborate detail all about her ravishing new gown for the next great ball, as the cerise one was getting to be a bore, and the lavender—she had decided after all—was not becoming, and as for the blue—— Then she had suddenly asked if Mr. Holcombe—that young Englishman!—had, by chance, any aristocratic relatives, and on learning that he was the nephew of an earl she had grown silent and pensive.

Anna mused idly on the divan of her own room which had a cheerful, bower-like effect, furnished all in light blue with a child-like design of daisies and bluebells on the wallpaper. She took up a little volume of Verlaine that was lying on the table beside her, and began to read,

THE YOUNG ENGLISH DIPLOMAT

when she was startled by a knock at the door and the maid brought in a box of flowers.

They were white roses, and they were from Kenneth. Anna remembered that she had once mentioned her fondness for white roses to him some weeks ago, and was pleased by his considerate memory. She did not stir from her languid posture, merely inhaled the delicate fragrance of the roses and lapsed into a reverie with half-closed eyes. How charming it was, she reflected, to have white roses sent her by such an enchanting cavalier. To be sure, other women received roses from other men; the situation was not unique. Neither was Kenneth overwhelming, the conqueror of the world; but he was distinguished, clever, delightful, and it was pleasant to receive white roses from him. With this amiable reflection she fell asleep and woke up languid from the strong fragrance that floated round her.

"White roses!" exclaimed Mr. Borden, half an hour later, when he came into his living-room and saw the flowers profusely displayed in several vases. "From whom?"

"From Mr. Holcombe," Anna replied gayly. "Isn't it a pretty attention? Was this morning's paper-mill satisfactory?" she added quickly.

Mr. Borden spent many of his mornings visiting factories in the city itself and in the neighborhood of Berlin to study methods and improvements which he might apply to his own paper-mills outside of Boston. Anna was pleased with this scheme, for she knew that, after his unwieldy morning's mail and his several newspapers were read, he began to miss his office, and to distract him from this homesickness for business she had even encouraged

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

him to write articles for magazines at home on his impressions of European business.

"No, it was not especially interesting," Mr. Borden replied. "And what have you been doing?"

"I have been riding in the Tiergarten with Natalie," said Anna, like the confession of a virtuous deed.

"Oh, that was nice," said her father pleasantly. "That reminds me, Mrs. Hamilton said she might have tea with you here this afternoon."

Anna was not thrilled with this prospect.

"So Mr. Holcombe sent those roses," said Mr. Borden, rather heavily.

"Yes," she replied lightly. "As I said, it was a pretty attention. Don't you think so, too?"

"It was not the first attention," Mr. Borden went on in the same tone.

"No, I admit that it was not," she said nonchalantly. "All the pleasanter!"

"Mr. Holcombe has made a rapid career," he continued. "For he must be rather young, and he is already second secretary."

"He may be advanced in a year or so," said Anna. "Lady Clarendon said they expected him to be first secretary before long."

"In that case he would be transferred to some other capital," mused her father. "Possibly to Washington!"

"That is very possible," Anna replied absently, as it seemed to her father, while she was looking at the illustrations to a large volume of "Holbein's Works."

"Anna!" her father cried out sternly.

Anna looked up from her picture-book with eyebrows raised and a mysterious smile, half expectant and half

THE YOUNG ENGLISH DIPLOMAT

bored. And her father continued: "You are affecting indifference—I know!"

"Indifference about what?" replied Anna cheerfully. "About Kenneth Holcombe? On the contrary: I think him quite charming—nothing less!"

Mr. Borden looked at her severely.

"In that case," he said with an effort at patience, "you might take a greater interest in your future."

"My future?" Anna raised her eyebrows again.

"Yes, your future," said her father, roused to indignation. "If your future life is not important to you, it is to me. I will have no more of this frivolity!"

"Frivolity?" repeated Anna, touched at last; she rose from her languid posture restlessly, and her lips twitched.

"I call that frivolity!" her father explained. "I want to talk seriously about the prospects for your future life, your husband——"

"My husband!" Anna stood frowning opposite her father.

"Will you please stop repeating every word!" cried Mr. Borden.

Then Anna burst into reckless laughter.

"But you seem to take everything for granted—" she explained, still laughing.

"You know very well," said her father impatiently, "that he is quite ready to ask you any day."

"But he hasn't," said Anna pouting. "Can't we leave this delicate discussion till then?"

"No," said Mr. Borden, "because I want you to know beforehand that I could not wish for a more desirable son-in-law."

"Indeed!" said Anna, dropping a mischievous courtesy

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

to her father. "I dare say you would like to mention casually 'my daughter, the English Ambassadress at Washington'——" she tossed back her head and made a jaunty movement with her arm.

Mr. Borden scowled.

"Enough!" he said curtly. "Leave me alone, please!"

"At what time is Mrs. Hamilton coming?" asked Anna demurely, with a secret sigh of relief.

"I don't know," was the reply from behind the *Paris Herald*.

In the seclusion of her little bower-like room Anna looked out of the window and sulked. Beneath her lay the courtyard with its artistic colonnades and statues, a dignified courtyard worthy of a palace, in summer swarming with gay tea-drinkers, now cold, gray and deserted. It seemed to Anna as if some of the bright glamour had fled, too, from her idyl with Kenneth. Why had her father handled this gay fluttering butterfly of a romance so brusquely, so clumsily? Future—husband! Anna laughed impatiently. She did not want a future from Kenneth—nor a husband! She wondered what she did want—perhaps only a charming cavalier and—ah, she knew!—moments—playful, tender, brilliant, enchanting moments!

Anna looked at her watch; almost four o'clock, and Mrs. Hamilton might come any minute—that dull, glib, worldly creature; and how many minutes would have to drag on before she could see Kenneth again! No, she probably would not see him at the Sondergast's musical evening to-night, nor to-morrow night, either. Yes, after all, why should he not go to see the new, much-talked-of production of "Hamlet"? His tastes were rather classic, and he always went to see what was new and good.

THE YOUNG ENGLISH DIPLOMAT

The telephone! Anna jumped up from her seat by the window. Oh—Mrs. Hamilton was waiting below? She would be down immediately! And Anna mechanically put on the hat with purple plumes which Mrs. Hamilton had admired, threw a fur scarf round her shoulders and walked down to the tea-room, raging within.

Anna's rage was cooled off soon by the distractions of the following days and nights. She had looked for Kenneth in vain at "Hamlet," but had met him unexpectedly the next night at a dinner of the American Consul's, where they had bantered across the table. There they had arranged to meet at the English Ambassador's reception in a few days, and after their much-interrupted meeting at the crowded, confused English Embassy, they had snatched more undisturbed intervals between acts of plays and operas for discourse and laughter. And finally they had met at the great masquerade ball—the mardi-gras festival, when she had pranced as *Carmen* and he had watched from the gallery merely to see her, too reserved and Anglo-Saxon himself to appear as a *Toreador*, yet full of laughter, of banter, of admiration for her. And it was on that night, at the door of her motor-car, that he had said in a low, eager voice:

"Ash Wednesday to-morrow; the season of loud festivities is over. It is time we no longer met in crowds. When can I see you quietly—alone?"

"Have tea with me at the Adlon—Friday at five!" she had whispered in reply.

And now Anna was welcoming Kenneth and leading him with the air of hostess to one of the many little tea-tables in the low, spacious hall. Mr. Borden followed her, greeted the young diplomat with genuine effusion,

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

and apologized that he had to hurry off and meet an American friend at the 5:10 train from Hamburg.

Tea at the Adlon was anything but quiet and alone; there was a persistent buzz of high voices interspersed with the clink of tea-cups. At the table nearest them three American girls, almost hidden in voluminous furs and broad hats, were giggling away in boarding-school fashion; behind Anna sat the sad, interestingly powdered comic-opera singer whom she had seen before, with her languid cavalier; in front of her the smug St. Louis banker and his pleasant, stout wife were discussing the quality of the sandwiches with the condescending waiter; a group of army officers, erect, challenging and gay, were winding their way with martial strides through the network of flimsy tables.

"This is a jolly place!" remarked Kenneth, swallowing his disappointment.

"I never tire of watching all these grasshoppers," said Anna cheerfully, although she knew that he was disappointed. He had, no doubt, expected four discreet walls! Still, she apologized to herself, this was the only conventional way to receive a caller in Berlin—and why not be conventional when it was pleasant to be so, both pleasant and ornamental?

"When I saw you last you were *Carmen*!" Kenneth said blandly.

"When I saw you last," Anna responded mischievously, "you were Kenneth Holcombe, second secretary at the English Embassy, correct, immovable, too dignified to appear in tinsel. Ah, you English are desperately afraid of ridicule!"

Kenneth laughed.

"No," he said unconvincingly. "I merely chose not to

THE YOUNG ENGLISH DIPLOMAT

waste effort on making myself dazzling. What is it to be admired, compared to the rapturous exercise of admiring?"

The tea was brought and Anna poured it with conscious grace.

"It gives me a thrill to pour tea," she said, handing Kenneth his cup. "A kind of historic thrill: I think of all the women who have poured tea before me, who are pouring tea at the same time and who shall pour tea hereafter. It is to me the symbol for polite intercourse, for ornamental uselessness——"

"It has a glamour," said Kenneth.

"Ah, you have it!" Anna exclaimed. "It has glamour. And you and I feed on glamour."

"Indeed?" said Kenneth. "You include me rashly. I think I demand a little more."

"Oh, you exorbitant soul!" mocked Anna. "Why demand more than glamour?"

Instead of replying Kenneth set down his cup and looked at her with a keen, serious glance.

"Let us go to the Museum—the Kaiser Friedrich Museum," he said, with an appeal that Anna could not resist, "and look at the good old pictures. It is very pleasant here—but we have had so many gay backgrounds! What do you say—into the room with the Florentines you like!"

Anna drank the last drop of tea in her cup leisurely, thoughtfully.

"Yes," she determined at last. "Let me get my coat; I will go!"

Ten minutes later they were strolling down Unter den Linden. A mild spring-like breeze had risen, and there was something languid and wistful in the air. But the

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

shop windows that they passed were as radiant as ever in mid-winter, and the sidewalk was crowded with people who looked critically or longingly at the jewelry or the books with glaring titles displayed in the windows, or read the posters for concerts and plays. Motor-cars were whizzing along the smooth gray asphalt, and shrill horns pierced the general noise of the street.

"Fresh violets, fresh violets!" screamed a little boy to Kenneth, who pressed a coin into the urchin's dirty hands and presented Anna with a trim, stiff bouquet.

Anna smiled and rejoiced at the brisk life about her. On the bridge at the end of Unter den Linden that leads to the great impressive square, the site of the royal palace and the cathedral, they stopped to look down at the houseboats with their cargoes of apples and vegetables, that dragged themselves sluggishly along on the river. Bright bits of red and blue—a child's dress, a newly painted boat—caught Anna's eye. "It's as good as Holland!" she exclaimed.

But Kenneth was eager to reach the Museum, and soon they were walking up the broad marble staircase within the solemn, hushed building. Anna felt the suspense of a child that was surmising a birthday surprise-party; and the solemn hush of the Museum charmed her even more than the bustle on the street.

"Where shall we go?" asked Kenneth.

"To the round Botticelli with the lilies," said Anna, and Kenneth understood.

They sat down before the picture that Anna liked, of a pale, sad Madonna and her maidens, holding lilies.

"I wonder why you like that picture," said Kenneth.

"I like it," said Anna, "because it has something quite

THE YOUNG ENGLISH DIPLOMAT

foreign to me—something quite different from anything I know or understand.”

Kenneth looked at her in surprise, a little sadly, too; and there was a silence. An art student with a freshly painted canvas crossed the room hurriedly; a tourist with a Baedeker walked deliberately along the walls that they were facing—then the room was quiet again.

“Anna!” cried Kenneth; his voice vibrated in the silence, a voice fraught with meaning.

Anna looked up at him candidly, in exquisite suspense.

“I have waited so long,” he said firmly. “I cannot keep it longer. I do love you so much—perhaps more than I have power to say, because I am not one of those wild love-makers—— Oh, let us not banter any longer! Come now——”

The glance of his bright blue eyes was appealing, beseeching, and Anna felt the beauty of his courtship, and the joy of being loved with such deference, such noble homage. He bent toward her; his lips, usually haughty and aristocratic, were trembling—all at once Anna woke up and realized that she must decide. And she had a sudden vision of her father welcoming with smug satisfaction his diplomatic son-in-law.

“No, Kenneth!” she cried, and drew back, repelling him with a gesture gentle but firm.

Kenneth stared at her, dazed, his lips twitching with inward pain.

“Why not?” he gasped, and on Anna’s ear his words grated like the cry of a wounded creature.

Anna sighed. Why had he broken their charming idyl so soon by this disturbing proposal? His plight appealed to her, and it thrilled her violently to know that she had power thus to pain a man so noble and reserved.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"Oh, Kenneth," she said compassionately. "You will think me cruel——"

"I want to know," he said, in a heavy, forced accent, "why you cannot accept some one who shares so many of your tastes, whose interests are yours, whose social sphere is——"

"Ah, that is it!" Anna broke in, flushed and excited. "Can't you see? I know, Kenneth, I understand your tastes, your interests, your friends—I understand it all too well! I understand you too well, Kenneth: you are no revelation to me. I expect something new of my marriage, something wonderful——"

"Ours might be wonderful," said Kenneth sternly. "We have a great career ahead of us——"

"It will be a dazzling career, I am sure," Anna interrupted with a silencing gesture and a look of pity. "But the man whom I must wait for is the man who——"

"Who what?" Kenneth demanded, straining all his stoic powers.

"Oh, Kenneth!" Anna cried out, rising impetuously, and standing opposite him with a wild, adventurous light in her black eyes. "I could never be afraid of you!"

Kenneth rose, too. His face, usually bright and healthy, was ashy pale, and the corners of his mouth drooped with the lines of pain and disgust. He gave Anna his hand almost mechanically.

"Good-by!" he said, in a hoarse voice. Then, glancing at the pictures, he seemed to remember where he was, and said in a forced conventional tone: "Let me see you home first!"

This forced politeness touched Anna, and her voice seemed veiled, almost toneless as she replied:

THE YOUNG ENGLISH DIPLOMAT

"No, I shall take a taxi at the door. Leave me, do! I am sorry—it is too bad—we have had such lovely moments together!"

She fairly ran out of the room and down the marble stairs, hailed the nearest cab outside, and, during the short ride, looked blankly out of the window, forcibly refraining from thought. When she had thrown herself, in negligee, on the confidential divan in her room, it seemed as though she had been holding her breath till now, and must breathe again deeply, or faint. Why had she not made up her mind definitely beforehand, and prepared a glib, soothing reply! Why had she not prevented him from speaking altogether, instead of giving way to that exquisite suspense? For now it was all over between her and Kenneth. It had been so charming!

And her father! The coming scene with him, above all, she loathed to think of; so she would not think of it at all, but waited till it should act itself out, inevitably. She glanced at her watch. Half past six o'clock, and her father had not come home yet! He had said that he might come back late from a committee meeting at the consulate, and that she should not wait for him. Anna actually felt a vague headache: she would not dress to-night and go down to the jabbering gay people, but stay up here and go to bed early, and avoid her father till the morning when she would be brisk again and ready for her defense.

Anna stared at the ceiling; a sense of dullness oppressed her. What could she look forward to now? They were not going to sail till April, but they might as well sail to-morrow; for when she looked at her future she saw blank space.

Her future! Anna dismissed that notion with scorn:

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

she had never worried about the future before, and she would not do it now. She recalled how, last year, when she left Paris, she had wondered what greater delights could be in store for her. The first winter of picture-seeing and music-hearing in a foreign capital, after two years of society at home, had given her rare artistic thrills, and, moreover, she had met stimulating characters in the American colony of Paris. But how much more dazzling had the winter in Berlin proved to be, the season of diplomatic society with its international glamour! And Anna's buoyant spirits were inflated again with hopeful expectations. Why should not something still more dazzling be yet to come?

In the morning she awoke in militant spirits. She would not dally with any preparations, but tell her father at once, and have it over. After a silent breakfast, devoted largely to the mail and the newspapers, she rose dramatically and said:

"I have bad news for you."

Mr. Borden laid down his paper instantly.

"What has happened?" he asked. "Aunt Sarah——?"

"No, nothing from home," Anna replied calmly. "It concerns only me."

"What have you been up to now?" he asked, impatiently, drawn to his newspaper.

"I have refused Kenneth Holcombe."

Mr. Borden leaned back in his chair, and a gloom, like clouds in a thunderstorm, swept over his set face.

"Why did you do that?" he asked sternly.

"Because he is not the husband I want," said Anna, with a proud toss of her head.

"But you knew," said her father, in a deep, severe

THE YOUNG ENGLISH DIPLOMAT

tone, while a threatening frown furrowed his brow, "that I wanted this engagement above all things!"

"But I did not," said Anna stubbornly.

"You have misled me," he cried, in open anger. "You have let me believe that you were only waiting for him to propose——"

"If you had not made your plans over my head," said Anna, erect and challenging before her father, "taking my consent for granted, as though I had no will of my own, I might have let you know that your successful aristocratic diplomat did not take my breath away at all. Besides, I did not quite know myself whether I wanted him or not; I only decided in the last moment. I did not willingly deceive you!"

"Then perhaps you will have the goodness to change your mind," said Mr. Borden scornfully.

"Change my mind?" Anna raised her eyebrows in frank astonishment. "What do you mean—after I have decided?"

"Now, Anna!" Mr. Borden's tone was condescending, almost conciliatory. "You know very well that you cannot hope to find a more desirable husband. He has made a brilliant career so far for his age, and promises to continue in the same way. He has excellent connections. As a man he is reserved——"

"I know his good qualities!" cried Anna, stopping up her ears.

"But you don't seem to have appreciated them," Mr. Borden continued, "and you are going to change your mind. Now don't protest! I have been far too lenient with you, considering how deeply disappointed I am. You will call me the conventional, worldly father, I know, in your stubbornness. But you are mistaken. I insist on

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

this marriage not because it is a marriage that any man in my place would wish for his daughter, but because I know that Mr. Holcombe is the one man suited to you, whose tastes, interests, environment——”

“I have heard that before!” said Anna.

“Not from me,” said her father.

“No, from him,” answered Anna.

“You are simply a spoiled child,” he declared. “One cannot reason with you. But I shall do all I can to bring this marriage about.”

With this threat he left the room, and Anna looked out of the window on to the dull, gray courtyard, and wondered what she could do all the long, dreary day.

Anna's engagements had grown fewer, now that the main season was over, but there were still plenty of calls to make, enough houses to slip into informally. But everywhere there was the danger of meeting Kenneth. And as for the opera and the theater—Anna made up her mind not to enter these fairylands any more, for she had always gone with her father, and she would not sit through a festive performance with him now that they were on such gloomy terms. So Anna turned to her books in these days of early March, to seek diversion in the most praised new French and German novels; but she found, somehow, that her mind wandered off, and it was only in poetry, in elastic verse that yielded to her own vague mood, that she found any satisfaction.

Mr. Borden's mood seemed to Anna anything but vague; it was distinctly sullen. The absorbing topic was not mentioned any more, and they talked blandly about indifferent events, but always with a sense of sultriness

THE YOUNG ENGLISH DIPLOMAT

before a storm. One night, after dinner, he said brusquely:

"I see no reason for waiting till April to go home. I have been away from business long enough. The danger of strikes will not be over, as long as John Bruce is raging in New England. The sooner I go back, the better. I can change the tickets easily at this time."

"I am willing to go home sooner," said Anna, rather pleased with the prospect of a sudden change, the flutter of good-by calls, the general excitement of going away.

Tickets were secured for the eighteenth of March, and during the next ten days Anna basked in an after-glow of the season's festivities. Informal farewell parties were given for her and her father, occasions at which Anna was once more celebrated and admired, and her departure genuinely deplored. At moments Anna forgot her blunted spirits and felt gay and inspired as before the day at the Museum; but the old charm had fled, and Anna felt that it was time to go home. Kenneth she met nowhere.

Mrs. Hamilton and Natalie, however, seemed to shoot up out of the floor of every house that Anna entered, and one day Mrs. Hamilton announced triumphantly that she had decided to sail on the same steamer with the Bordens.

At last, with the reposeful sense of having completed a chapter of her life, Anna watched out of the train window the flat, melancholy heaths on the way to Hamburg. Her father was in a remarkably good humor, quite contrary to her expectations, considering that they had left Berlin and the longed-for potential son-in-law. Mr. Borden was even jocular and pleased, like a child, with the deer and the hares that he espied from the

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

train window, so that Anna began to be alarmed at his unnatural demeanor.

They reached Hamburg toward dusk and counted on a day of rest in the beautiful dark city of two rivers. The next morning Anna started up with a sense of wistful adventurousness that always seized her when she was near the sea for the first time after long inland confinement.

Her father's spirits were even better than the day before, and Anna attributed them to his joy at coming home to the business, to Aunt Sarah, to their cheerful country house in Manchester-by-the-Sea. But as they were strolling along the esplanade by the Alster River, watching the cloud shadows on the broad stretch of water and the solemnly gliding swans, and tracing with their eyes the picturesque horizon line with its many slender spires, it suddenly occurred to Anna, whose mind had been set adrift by the reposeful scene about her, that Mrs. Hamilton and Natalie might arrive in Hamburg any moment, and that they, of course, were responsible for her father's gayety. And she sighed a little at the prospect of the steamer voyage.

Toward noon the Hamiltons really came, Natalie bored and pale by daylight, Mrs. Hamilton all effusion.

"Now isn't it delightful that we can spend a whole afternoon together!" she exclaimed. "With nothing in the world to worry about. Oh—but it does make me shiver to think of getting up at six to-morrow morning. Why do those boats start at such unearthly hours?"

A leisurely drive to the new Zoölogical Gardens was planned for the afternoon, but Anna asked leave to stay at the hotel and write some of her many obligatory fare-

THE YOUNG ENGLISH DIPLOMAT

well notes, whereupon Mrs. Hamilton and Natalie protested politely. But her father, to Anna's surprise, encouraged her eagerly to stay and write those letters, because if she left them all for the Cherbourg or Southampton mails she would find herself writing all day on the steamer. Anna wondered if her father had surmised her coolness toward the Hamiltons and wanted to save her from a tiresome afternoon, or whether he really thought her an intruder. Whatever his motives were, Anna was glad, when her father and his friends had driven away, to muse alone in the quiet, deserted writing-room of the Hotel Esplanade. There was no bustle here, no discord of voices as in the Adlon, and the room was spacious, the furniture massive and restful. Anna was in no haste to write her letters, but snatched up a Berlin newspaper and reclined in a deep armchair.

An English-speaking voice from the office made her lay down her paper and listen; the voice was familiar, and the accent was not American. A thrilling surmise made Anna alert, and in the next moment Kenneth stood before her.

"I hope I am not disturbing you," he said, in the forced conventional tone that she had heard at the Museum. "I have come up to Hamburg for a day or two—I just stepped over from where I am staying on the other side of the Alster——"

He looked at Anna with a tense solemnity in his lucid blue eyes that had no connection whatever with what he was saying. Anna felt keenly the dramatic nature of the situation and at the same time a sudden delight in his presence after a lengthy separation. She would not respond to his artificial tone.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"But how did you dare——?" she asked, coming straight to the point.

She motioned him to sit down, and faced him intently, once more alive with a throbbing suspense.

The mute dropped from Kenneth's voice.

"Anna!" he cried. "I should not have thrust myself on you any more—but your father gave me hope!"

Anna recoiled in limp disgust. So this had been her father's cheerfulness on the way, his willingness to leave her alone with her letters! He had thought to outwit her by strategy, but she would be his equal!

"He said that you were capricious," Kenneth went on eagerly. "That this was probably a mere whim of yours and that you really——"

"That I really love you!" finished Anna, laughing recklessly, and Kenneth rose, his face illumined by an ardent hope.

Anna wanted to hold this moment fast; it thrilled her to be worshiped again by Kenneth and quickened in her the full sense of her power.

"Oh, Kenneth!" she exclaimed, with a shrug of her shoulders, looking up at him with sparkling eyes. "What is love? There are so many kinds of love, and the kind I want is something terrible—something—— Oh, why shall I repeat it again? I have made it all clear to you before."

"But what you are saying there," he pleaded, "is fantastic——"

"Father told you that!" Anna interrupted sternly. "You did not think it fantastic that day in the Museum."

"No, it overwhelmed me then," he replied. "But I have had time to ponder since——"

THE YOUNG ENGLISH DIPLOMAT

"Don't think!" cried Anna. "This is not a matter for thought."

There was a long silence; then Kenneth started to leave.

"Is there no hope, then?" he asked, on the steps to the lobby. His expression was almost childlike, as though he could not grasp how she could be so cruel.

Anna shook her head and rose slowly.

"Kenneth," she begged in her veiled voice, "please come to the steamer to-morrow morning!"

"Why?" he gasped.

"Because," she answered solemnly, "I want to have you in my last moment of Europe!"

Kenneth turned away bitterly.

"Will you come?" she asked, with all the appeal that she could conjure into her voice.

Kenneth was silent and seemed to be debating with himself whether he would appease such a brutal whim or not.

"I will!" he said at last, and left her alone.

The next morning at ten o'clock Anna was looking down from the high deck of the great steamer *America* at the pushing, scampering passengers that were filing up the gang-plank. The old, familiar steamer atmosphere was surrounding her—the jumble of baggage and flowers, of parting kisses and officers' shouts, the mixed scent of sea breeze and tar. Anna was glad to be on the large, distracting ship at last, for the two hours' train ride with her father from Hamburg to the harbor had been a torture. Last night, just five minutes before Mrs. Hamilton rustled down to dinner, he had asked her in a confidential and triumphant tone if it was all

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

peacefully settled now between her and Kenneth, and she had answered: "No, I have not changed my mind in the least." And since then he had veritably glowered at her whenever Mrs. Hamilton or Natalie were not present. Fortunately, they had been in the same compartment with her and her father on the way from Hamburg, but even the older woman's glib cheerfulness had not taken the frown from his brow or the sullen cloud out of his eyes.

Would Kenneth arrive? She had not seen him on the train, and he was by no means obliged to come. If she could only see him for one moment, all her tired, irritable mood would blow away.

Some girls near her were joking with clanging laughter; a pale woman in black was crying and waving at the pier; a little boy in a sailor suit was flourishing an American flag; a stout woman was scolding a steward because she had lost her handbag. Anna saw it all as through a veil. Where was Kenneth?

The first whistle blew; it would soon be too late! Oh—there he was coming up the gang-plank, searching for her with his keen, eager glance. She ran to meet him.

"Kenneth!" she cried.

"Anna!"

They stood face to face in the thick of the noisy throng. All the many beautiful hours of discourse, of laughter, of sober confidence with him seemed to rush, like many torrents into a single pool, even into this last moment. She did not give him her hand to kiss, as she had meant to do, she did not give him her photograph which she had carried in her bag for the purpose. She simply looked at him and gave herself up to the thrill of the moment.

THE YOUNG ENGLISH DIPLOMAT

"You have been an exquisite experience to me, Kenneth!" she uttered at last from the depth of her soul.

"You have been the ruin of my life to me!" said Kenneth bitterly.

In that instant the whistle blew again and the last visitors on the boat rushed headlong to the gang-plank. Kenneth raised his hat in silent greeting and turned away.

Anna would not watch him. She bit her lip and breathed hard, and ran, as though she were pursued, past staring fellow-passengers, to the other side of the boat where her father was looking at a lighthouse through Mrs. Hamilton's opera glasses.

CHAPTER III

MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

TWO months later Anna was reading Sudermann's last novel in the library of her country home in Manchester-by-the-Sea. Her father was reading, too, and Aunt Sarah was busily sewing on a doll's dress for a church fair. Aunt Sarah was an old-fashioned little lady, almost ten years older than Anna's father, much given to charity and devoted to housekeeping, who, even in the most bustling and elaborate surroundings, could never lose her serene cottage soul. Anna laid down her book and listened to the ticking of the big old clock, wondering how Aunt Sarah could sew thus tranquilly night after night. She had probably sewed every night while Anna and her father had been abroad, or played a gentle game of solitaire, or read their letters over and over again—for letters she did read!

The library was a cheerful haunt for quiet spring nights. The walls were lined with dark, solemn books, chiefly works on economics, history, biography—for Anna kept her own books upstairs—and the narrow spaces between the shelves were hung with etchings that she had brought from Paris. On the broad, mahogany table in the middle of the room was a bronze model of Rodin's "Penseur," and a bronze menagerie of paper weights: elephants, turtles, griffins, sphinx-lionesses and many more, all in faultless order to show that

MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

this was not a desk used for business. The low, dark leather armchairs, the dark purple and bronze-colored rugs and the spacious fireplace with its black andirons—all gave the room a dignified winter-proof appearance in contrast to the rest of the light, airy summer villa. At the open window, however, the sea breeze made the curtain flutter, and gusts of cool, salty air explained the muffled murmur of waves. Anna loved the mysterious refrain of the sea at night, and she was, besides, very fond of the house where she had played wild games and dreamed gay fantasies as a child. When she had come home from the steamer in March to the house and to Aunt Sarah's hovering care, it had been a relief to escape from the obligatory daily conversations with the Hamiltons and the buzz of strange voices that had somehow lost its charm, and to linger in all the corners of the house that were endeared by old associations.

Then, too, the calls on her friends in Boston had given her pleasure. It had been amusing to live all her gay Berlin experiences over again in the form of polished accounts prepared for the entertainment of admiring friends. But the novelty of these tales soon wore off, and, as the days grew warmer, the surrounding woods and the sea more seductive, she confined her roamings more and more to Manchester-by-the-Sea. To-night, for the first time, in spite of her exciting novel, she noticed how slowly the old clock was ticking.

"What do you say, Anna!" Mr. Borden looked up from his book. "It is getting rather quiet for you here. Hadn't we better begin to entertain a little?"

Anna turned round slowly, for she felt weighed down by a leaden indifference. A procession of possible guests at her house strolled across her mind, and she

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

realized that, although the list was long, the ties that still bound her to the acquaintances at home after two winters' absence were but slender. There were, of course, a few school friends, with whom she liked to forget that she was twenty-three, but what her father had in mind was probably not a boarding-school frolic.

"Whom could we ask," she replied languidly, "except relatives?"

"Why, Anna!" exclaimed her father. "Haven't we innumerable friends?"

"And what is the objection to inviting relatives?" asked Aunt Sarah mildly.

"Oh, none at all!" said Anna, smiling benignly. "And I do want to see Cousin Frank again! He is such a nice boy! And he must be overworking at the Law School, so it will do him good to spend a week-end here."

"I think it would be nice to ask the Stimsons," Aunt Sarah suggested. "Amy came out this winter; she has grown to be very attractive. She used to drop in to see me rather often in the winter, and I thought that was very sweet of her when she was so busy."

"Her brother is not in my line," said Anna, "but I had just as lief ask them both."

In fact, she felt that it was quite indifferent to her who should be invited.

"I imagine Anna misses somebody with whom she can talk about Berlin," said her father to Aunt Sarah. "On the other hand, I see no reason why we should ask only young people. Isn't there somebody whom you would like to be polite to, Sarah?" he added, as an afterthought.

"Oh, no, George!" Aunt Sarah protested. "I have seen my friends all winter long—I want you to ask whoever you like, my boy!"

MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

"Well, then," he continued, "you have never met Mrs. Hamilton, have you, Sarah?"

And when Aunt Sarah shook her head, he said with conviction: "She is a very bright, entertaining woman."

"And Natalie, too?" asked Anna meekly, anticipating the actual proposal of Mrs. Hamilton's visit.

"Why, of course," said Mr. Borden. "I meant her for you so that you can talk over Berlin events together. We ought to ask them for at least a week."

"But Natalie will want some men to entertain her," said Anna, who had a depressing vision of herself walking silently on an endless beach beside Natalie in a faultless linen suit.

"Well, you will have the Stimsons," her father returned. "And you can ask Frank, as you planned."

"How about that clever Paul Wheelwright that used to come here?" asked Aunt Sarah.

An individual shot into Anna's mind who for two years had not invaded the closely settled territory of her memory; she remembered that Paul Wheelwright was indeed rather clever and pleasant, good-looking and a lawyer.

"But will they all stay a week?" asked Aunt Sarah politely.

"Oh, no," said Mr. Borden. "The men couldn't stay so long early in June. We will have a week-end frolic and keep only the Hamiltons. But if Frank has finished his examinations by that time, why, he can stay, too."

Again the vision of the dreary walk on the beach with Natalie troubled Anna. She wondered why she did not make the effort to protest against this Hamilton invasion; she was surely not timid about opposing her

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

father, and yet she had consistently kept her dislike of the Hamiltons a secret, because it was impossible to explain a dislike so ethereal. Moreover, her father associated them somehow with Kenneth, and she did not like to conjure up that name!

"I am satisfied," she said lamely.

"You are not very enthusiastic," commented Aunt Sarah.

Anna watched the fluttering curtain in silence, till a gentle thought that was growing in her mind was quite adult.

"I should like to have one of my old school friends come, too," she said finally. "Do you remember Ruth Gregory, Aunt Sarah?"

"Let me see——" Aunt Sarah paused in her sewing. "Is she that little brown girl with the shy voice who used to play piano, so that you and the other children could dance?"

"Exactly," said Anna. "I haven't seen her for four years."

"How did that happen?" asked Aunt Sarah, resuming her work.

"Why, she went to college straight from school," said Anna. "To Wellesley. So she was occupied in the winter, and the summers she stayed with her family in the mountains. Oh, I believe I did see her once or twice when she came home at Christmas and Easter, but that was nothing; I have a sudden fancy that I want to see her again."

"Well—why not?" said Aunt Sarah, and Mr. Borden was reading again. So Anna strolled up into her boudoir adjoining her bedroom to write the invitations. It was a spacious room, with graceful, light maplewood furni-

MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

ture and glass doors opening onto a wide balcony that faced the sea. Anna stepped out and drew in deep breaths of the strong salt air and watched the white ghostly line of surf that shone through the blackness, and the stars on the clouded, moonless sky. She was reminded of similar nights on the steamer when she had fled from the Hamiltons and leaned, alone, over the railing and her thoughts had rushed again, inevitably, to Kenneth. Anna realized with a shock that during the last two months she had been feeding on reminiscences, a symptom that alarmed her, for she knew that when her spirit was in health it looked before and not after. And she wondered what soul disease was growing upon her.

The invitations were written, sent off and soon accepted. On the first Friday afternoon in June Mrs. Hamilton swept through the Borden's villa.

"Aren't these rooms delightful!" she piped in her artificial voice, whisking up her lorgnette to examine details. "Have you ever seen such a beautiful, sunny effect, Natalie?"

"It is very pretty, indeed," blandly replied Natalie, who followed at Anna's side.

"Such pictures—Corot, I do believe—that's a Corot, isn't it, Mr. Borden?" Mrs. Hamilton continued her effusion without waiting for a reply. "And how well they look against that silver-gray wall! I never saw such rugs—that pinkish, grayish one is a beauty! Oh—but do look at the view, Natalie, isn't that gorgeous!"

Natalie obeyed, and Anna opened the doors from the reception-room to the wide front porch. Gloucester hammocks and swinging seats hung from the roof of the veranda, wicker rocking-chairs and sofas were grouped lightly round the tea-table where the tea was steaming

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

pleasantly. And below the porch a smooth lawn sloped down to the light blue sea.

"How charming!" exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton.

Anna thought that the veranda in its hospitable array with the free view of the sea was indeed charming, and yet she would rather have been in the little fishing-dory that was sailing past the rocky island out at sea.

"I hear that you and Anna have had some pleasant times together in Berlin!" Aunt Sarah was saying in a kindly tone to Natalie, who answered mechanically:

"Yes, indeed, we have had some very good times."

Aunt Sarah seemed almost a little afraid of Natalie with her proud, cold splendor and her metallic voice, for the meek old lady turned away without further effort to continue the discourse. Anna wondered, moreover, in the course of the long afternoon, why Natalie asked her solely about her plans for the next winter, and if she had begun to play tennis—but never mentioned Berlin or even the steamer. Either she was reserving some diplomatic, indiscreet question about Kenneth for confidential evening hours or the events of last winter meant so little to her that local affairs had crowded them out of her callous mind.

Just as Anna was thus musing silently, a motor-car stopped in front of the house, and the next moment a bright-eyed, boyish young man burst in on the party, jovially swinging his cap.

"Hello!" he cried. "Here I am, after all! I had my last exam this morning. Glad to see you all!"

The breezy newcomer started at the sight of the strangers.

"My Cousin Frank—Mr. Frank Borden," said Anna, presenting him to the Hamiltons.

MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

Poor Frank seemed dazzled by Natalie's beauty, set off, as it was, by her light green gown, her bracelets and dangling earrings; and Anna secretly rejoiced, for she hoped that he would take from her shoulders the task of entertaining her bored and handsome guest. Frank was a "dear boy," full of enthusiasm about his prospects for cruising and yacht racing, and Anna listened to his loud, boyish voice with almost a grandmother's fondness. After dinner they all sat out on the porch by the light of a slender new moon till they were sleepy enough to go to bed, and Natalie, to Anna's relief, had no inclination for a tête-à-tête.

On Saturday morning at half past eleven o'clock the house party was complete except for Ruth Gregory, and all the young people were playing tennis on the two courts at the left of the house. Natalie and Cousin Frank were playing against little Amy Stimson and Paul Wheelwright in a game of doubles, while Anna was playing against young Stimson, a heavy broad-shouldered, blank-faced athlete who made her wonder if he ever took a business transaction as seriously as he seemed to take the score of this game.

"Thirty-love!" he was shouting lustily, and in the momentary excitement of the game and the violent motions Anna forgot that she did not care for the man with whom she was playing, that the whole party was uncongenial to her, and that she was generally indifferent. Only when the game was over—with defeat for herself—and the others, too, were beginning to weary of playing and to rest on the benches before the little pine-grove, Anna wished that they might go on playing tennis forever to avoid the uninspired intercourse of souls.

"Oh, I haven't been so excited in all my life!" cried

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

Amy Stimson, flushed and panting. "I was sure we would get deuce again!"

Amy, with her light, curly hair and her somewhat insipid, blue eyes in a flushed, naïve face, presented a contrast to Natalie, who was not even breathless after the game. Cousin Frank accordingly was bantering and laughing at ease with Amy, while his admiring eyes stole over to Natalie, who was talking in a blasé voice and short, jerky sentences to young Mr. Wheelwright.

"I am going to play with you this afternoon, Miss Borden!" Paul Wheelwright called over to Anna.

"Oh, no!" Anna returned. "There will be no tennis this afternoon. Frank is going to take us sailing on his yacht."

There was something about the handsome and agile young man that annoyed Anna, but she could not tell what it was; however, she knew that she wished to avoid him.

In the afternoon Anna found no difficulty in avoiding long conversation with any one, for the sail was absorbing enough in itself. Frank's new two-masted schooner was sailed from its mooring in Marblehead Harbor to a landing place not far from the house by a picturesque old skipper who with the other two men helped the young lively yachtsman sail northward along the coast. There was a brisk, but not a violent, east wind, and the schooner ran smoothly with very little pitching over the deep blue, rippling water, past rocks and beaches, and beautiful villas set in gentle woods. The girls were busy exclaiming at the views and cheering the men at their pleasant work, so Anna had leisure to look into the water and muse. She wondered if she would be home in time to meet Ruth Gregory at the 5:40 train, and if Ruth

MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

would have changed much in the last two years. Her imagination somehow clung to Ruth, for it had to cling to something when the present failed to absorb it. This vacancy of spirit was new to Anna and stung as hunger stings some one accustomed to plenty.

The boat landed in ample time, so that Anna could stroll leisurely to the station after her guests had dispersed to dress for the evening. When Ruth skipped down from the train and ran to meet her, Anna decided that her little school friend had not changed a bit; she had the same graceful, demure air, the same wistful appeal in her large golden-brown eyes.

"Oh, Anna!" she exclaimed with enthusiasm on the way to the house. "You must have had wonderful experiences since I saw you last!"

Anna shrugged her shoulders and smiled.

"And you," she replied pensively, "must have learned a great deal while I have been away."

"Oh, but that's nothing!" laughed Ruth.

An hour later, when Ruth had exchanged her traveling-suit for a quaint white frock and her thick wavy brown hair was revealed, Anna introduced her to the others, and observed that Ruth, in spite of her mouse-like air and hushed voice, was nevertheless much more at ease than Natalie with all her bored grandeur. At the same time Anna felt that it was probably Ruth who would be bored with the other girls, and perhaps with the men, too.

At dinner Anna sat with Paul Wheelwright, whom she had hitherto avoided, merely to appease her conscience as hostess. He questioned her with genuine interest about her winters in Paris and Berlin and incidentally betrayed his familiarity with foreign theaters and

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

restaurants; he had, moreover, a slight, affected English accent.

"A jolly place!" he was saying. "Rather theatrical!"

Anna did not know what place he was referring to, for she had ceased to listen, preoccupied with a suddenly conceived idea. This Paul Wheelwright was a cheap imitation of Kenneth, and that was why he had annoyed her since his arrival!

After dinner, Anna's real task of entertaining began, when Mrs. Hamilton followed Aunt Sarah to the small parlor opposite the large reception room, beckoning to Anna's father with a sweetish smile.

"Come, Mr. Borden!" she called. "We must leave the young people to themselves."

The "young people" were not inspired, as it seemed to Anna, but they were cheerful. Paul Wheelwright produced a number of funny stories that kindled laughter real and forced. Then cousin Frank, in his loud, boyish voice, quoted jokes from the *Harvard Lampoon*; the numbers of *Life* that lay scattered on the little mosaic table were passed round, and Amy thought one picture after another "killingly funny." Anna felt as though she must apologize to Ruth for the flatness of the entertainment, but Ruth was laughing herself, and even looking at the same page with Natalie who sat beside her on the little white sofa. Then Anna remembered that she had often had convulsions over jokes in *Life* and funny stories no better than Paul Wheelwright's, and she decided that something must be wrong with her.

"Anna, where's the Victor?" cried Cousin Frank. Ah, the Victor! In that moment the Victor Talking Machine seemed to Anna the greatest scientific invention

MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

that gave the human labor of entertainment over to machinery.

"It's in the hall," she answered. "I'll get it started. Now all decide what you want. Frank knows the repertoire by heart!"

The ocean rumbled a sonorous accompaniment that swept in through the open doors and windows, as *Carmen*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Mephistopheles* and *Lohengrin* sang invisibly, mysteriously into the summer night. But when the record with the duet of *Tristan* and *Isolde* drinking the love-potion had been put into the machine by Frank while Anna was passing round candy, and the deep, passionate voices of the singers, only tarnished slightly by the metallic ring of the machine, trembled through the silence, Anna had to think of the night at the opera with Kenneth when she had allowed him to call her "Isolde." Desperately, to push herself back into her immediate surroundings, she cried, as soon as the selection was finished, "Let's have *The Count of Luxembourg* next!" and the proposition was eagerly accepted by her guests.

When the general delight in music had begun to wane and Anna had told Frank to put away the records, Fred Stimson suggested bridge. Anna loathed cards herself and used to boast that she could always keep up such a lively conversation, that it would never occur to any of her guests to suggest a game. And now she was defeated. She called in Aunt Sarah and Mrs. Hamilton to "join in the fun," and to her great surprise her father, too, offered to play.

The next night—a tranquil Sunday evening—the whole company was assembled on the veranda. The day had been unusually hot for June, and they had spent it

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

strolling along the beach or rocking and swinging languidly on the porch. And now the cigarettes of the men gleamed effectively in the dark, while rivaling fireflies flitted over the lawn. The sickle-moon cast a long ribbon of silvery light over the sea and revealed the shadowy outlines of rocks. Mr. Borden was talking politics with Paul Wheelwright, to the relief of Anna, who was tired of the day's harmless gossip and light flirtations.

But when a cool night-wind swept toward the veranda from the sea, and the cigarettes were all extinguished, Aunt Sarah led the way into the reception room, where the bright electric lights were dazzling after the mild darkness outside.

"Why don't one of you young ladies perform a little on the piano to-night?" suggested Mrs. Hamilton.

"You, Miss Natalie!" said Mr. Borden.

"Go on, child," said the vain mother.

"Why, Mamma!" Natalie protested sternly. "You know I play for nobody."

Anna, who concluded that she counted as "nobody," had heard Natalie play often and poorly enough to warrant her refusal.

"Oh, do!" Frank urged enthusiastically. "I am sure you're a wonderful player!" Whereupon Natalie smiled with flattered condescension.

"How about Amy?" asked Aunt Sarah.

"Haven't practiced for a year!" Amy snapped, pirouetting childishly.

"Why, Ruth!" said Anna. "You play, of course. I know you do."

"What do you want to hear?" asked Ruth simply, in her subdued voice, and, to Anna's surprise, walked directly to the piano.

MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

"The Schubert 'Impromptu'," said Anna, "that you used to play at school!"

Ruth played and even Mrs. Hamilton and Fred Stimson were impressed by the delicacy of her touch. They all asked her to play more and more, and Ruth never seemed to tire of playing. When she ended with Anna's favorite Chopin "Nocturne," Anna forgot everything else but the music.

Late at night, when the house had begun to grow hushed, Anna called on Ruth in her room.

"I love your playing!" she said enthusiastically. "You are a real musician. I should think you might be tempted to play in public some day."

Ruth shook her head firmly.

"No," she said in an objective tone. "I may have talent, but I surely have no genius. And I have decided for another work."

"Oh, what is that?" cried Anna, impressed by Ruth's calm seriousness.

"Why, you know," Ruth replied, as she combed her long brown hair, "that my father is at the head of several large charity organizations——"

"Yes, I know," said Anna timidly.

"Well, I am going into his line," Ruth declared.

"But you have only just finished college," said Anna.

"Why, yes," said Ruth in mild surprise. "What of it?"

Anna grew pensive.

"I have an idea!" she said eagerly. "Won't you stay a few days longer? Then you can tell me all about your plans at leisure in a little enchanted retreat among the rocks where I will lead you. I am really so anxious to hear about them!"

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

Ruth accepted the invitation gleefully.

"But," she protested. "I haven't heard a thing about your wonderful times in Berlin—and they must be a thousand times more exciting than anything I have to tell."

"Oh, what are they?" Anna shrugged her shoulders. "Bubbles! Good night!"

The next day, in the early afternoon, when the Stimsons and Paul Wheelwright had whirled away, Anna was swinging in a Gloucester hammock on the porch, while Frank was smoking on the railing. With great animation, she was encouraging him to pay as much attention as possible to Natalie, and the obedient youth was conjuring up visions of tête-à-tête sets of tennis, sails round the island in the small dory, strolls on the beach and other out-door idyls, while Anna congratulated herself that, by getting rid of Natalie in this way, she could have some sensible talks with Ruth.

From the retreat where Anna led Ruth, a hollow in a large rock close to the sea, nothing could be seen but the rock immediately below and the deep blue water beyond. The coast had vanished on either side and only the island remained, isolated as if it were in mid-ocean. In this romantic spot Ruth explained to Anna in a mild voice, barely audible above the murmur of the surf, and a strangely technical vocabulary, the aims and methods of the different charity organizations.

"And what kind of work will you do?" asked Anna.

"Well, I have to find out first," said Ruth, "what line will be most useful to take up. You see, with my father's help, I can easily get a responsible position, because I could always rely on his advice. I have

MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

thought of helping to organize a new home for destitute and crippled children."

Crippled children! These two words fell like a blot on the sunlit beauty of the surrounding scene. Though uttered in the gentlest voice, they grated on Anna's ears; in this serene retreat they seemed indecent, and Anna felt herself blush.

"But I am not at all sure," Ruth went on, with her large, golden-brown eyes fixed on the horizon. "I shall have to find out when I know more."

Anna had a vision of Ruth, in the garb of St. Elizabeth, carrying a basket of roses through narrow, dirty streets, laying her hand on the shoulder of some consumptive little boy on crutches.

"And what started you along this line?" she asked cautiously. "Is it on account of your father——"

"Why, in a way," answered Ruth. "And then I took a great many courses on economics and sociology in college, and that made me interested in those problems."

Anna noticed that Ruth was not at all sentimental about her noble undertaking, for she had not said: "There is so much suffering in the world!" or "I want to do some good while I live"—a startling attribute of some one with a shy voice and mild brown eyes.

"Tell me about your college life!" said Anna eagerly. She, who had seen and read so much, felt suddenly ignorant, like a schoolgirl. "Do you suppose I should have liked it?"

"Oh, you would have loved it!" cried Ruth, while her face kindled with enthusiasm. "You read so much and know so many languages. I am sure you would enjoy the lectures; and I think you would like the life, too. Have you never gone over the Wellesley grounds?"

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"Yes," said Anna. "I went there once long ago on a lovely spring day, when the pussy-willows were out and the trees were budding. I saw the students in sol-emn caps and gowns walk arm in arm across the lawn, and I thought, this is a beautiful, serene nunnery, and these are the nuns strolling to their devotions!"

"You are getting lyric!" laughed Ruth. "Oh, but if you saw the plays we had, and the out-door games and masquerade frolics, you would think we were anything but nuns."

"But the routine!" said Anna. "The same programme week after week—the same place day after day—the same people. No, I don't think that I could stand routine; it is the last thing in life to which I could get accustomed. And fancy me in cap and gown!"

"Hallo, there! We've captured you at last!" Frank's triumphant voice rang out from above, and the peaceful retreat was invaded.

Nevertheless Anna contrived opportunities for pensive discourse with Ruth during the rest of her visit, while Frank was escorting his proud lady. When Ruth had to leave, Anna was sad and said wistfully:

"I will give you a most symbolic kiss. That means 'Come again soon!'"

When Anna approached her house she heard the mechanical rhythm of a waltz, and she saw through the window that Natalie was actually playing to Frank, who stood in rapt attention. Anna flitted through the hall, past the open door of the reception room and slipped, unnoticed, out on to the porch. As she was swinging idly on the Gloucester hammock and looking over the grayish sea, Aunt Sarah came toward her from the

MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

lawn. She held up her skirts primly from the moist grass, and came trippingly up the veranda-steps.

"I am sorry Ruth is gone," said Aunt Sarah, taking a rocking chair beside Anna. "I liked her."

"I wish the Hamiltons were gone instead," Anna snapped. Aunt Sarah looked up at her with a shocked expression which, however, changed into a timid smile.

"I understand," she said mildly. "I wonder——"

"You wonder—and I wonder, too," said Anna, "why father has such a weakness for this tiresome pair."

"I suppose they have a certain dash," said Aunt Sarah with a subdued sigh, "but——"

"And father usually has good taste! This is a perverted whim. Mother wouldn't have liked Mrs. Hamilton!" said Anna suddenly. "Would she now?"

Anna seldom spoke of her mother, because she disliked to dwell on sad memories, and she could not think of her without recalling the last year of her creeping illness, and the horrible day of her death.

"I should say not!" said Aunt Sarah eagerly. "Your mother was quite different."

Anna had a vision of her mother in the days of her health, as she used to sweep through the drawing-room stately and reserved, with her regular, aristocratic features and her fine profusion of silver-gray hair—always rigorously conventional, but distinguished by a rare dignity.

"Natalie's waltz has stopped!" Anna said abruptly. "I'll have to go in and speak to them."

Hardly had she spoken, when Frank came rushing out, with a telegram in his hand.

"I say, Anna!" he cried out. "Isn't it a shame? I got a telegram from the Mater telling me to come home

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

at once to help entertain some kid cousins twice removed that I don't care a rap about."

"Oh, that's too bad, Frank!" Anna exclaimed with genuine regret. "You were so good at helping me entertain!"

When Frank, disguised in his motor-coat and goggles, had whizzed out of sight in his motor-car, Anna commented to Natalie:

"He is an awfully nice boy!"

"Yes, he is," Natalie replied in a voice of utter indifference, with a slight curl of her lips to indicate that she did not take the flirtation too seriously.

The following days dragged for Anna, but they were not as bad as she had feared, for while Natalie spent considerable time in looking over the newspapers and magazines or in dressing, Anna felt at liberty to leave her alone; and Mrs. Hamilton's gossip was usually addressed to the patient Aunt Sarah. Nevertheless, when the Hamiltons had left for good, with Mr. Borden, who accompanied them to town, Anna danced a war dance through the deserted house and embraced her frightened aunt fiercely.

"Now we are free!" she cried exuberantly.

"Dear me, child!" exclaimed Aunt Sarah. "Are you as glad as all that!"

"We are free!" Anna repeated dramatically, flinging up her arms. "But the question is," she added with a sigh, "free for what?"

The roaring of the waves and the whistling of a fierce sea-wind lured Anna out over the lawn, across the beach, on to the nearest rock. Momentous surf was pounding on the beach and dashing against the rock,

MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

shooting up fountains of creamy spray, while a fine drizzling rain filled the chilly air. The storm was the proper accompaniment to Anna's mood, and she felt desperately drawn sea-ward. The sight of a little fishing craft near the island, tossed about dangerously by the waves, was a delight to her eyes.

"The sea! The sea!" she cried out aloud, and in those words she found the mystery of all her discontent and longing.

The roar of the sea and wind reverberated in her inward ear for the rest of the afternoon and during the uninspiring dinner with Aunt Sarah and Mr. Borden, who had returned from his chivalrous expedition. After dinner, when they had settled round a crackling fire in the library, because the night was cool and damp, Mr. Borden leaned back in his chair and said with a heavy cheerfulness:

"Well, Anna, when shall we have our next house-party?"

"I don't intend ever to have a next house-party," Anna replied.

Mr. Borden started.

"What!" he cried. "How shall I understand that?"

Anna rose and stood close by the fire, watching the flames.

"I have noticed, anyway," her father went on reproachfully, "that you did not put your heart into entertaining your guests as you used to do. You didn't pay much attention to anyone, except the little Gregory girl; you hardly spoke to Mr. Wheelwright. What, on earth, is the matter with you?"

His tone grew excited and Aunt Sarah, who shrank from "scenes," discreetly slipped out of the door. The

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

wind rattled against the window-panes, and the rumble of the waves grew louder and louder; but in the room the silence was oppressive.

"I hate this idle life!" Anna cried.

She had said it: till this moment she had not known herself how to interpret the murmuring and storming within her soul; but now that she had said it, all was clear.

Mr. Borden laughed.

"I suppose," he said, "that Gregory girl has been getting ideas into your head."

Anna remained silent.

"If you are discontented with your home," her father continued bitterly, "it is your own fault. You willfully threw away your opportunity for a brilliant career."

"Why do you start on this old topic again!" cried Anna, flushing. "I thought that chapter was closed for good."

"I will open it again whenever I think fit," her father returned with a dark frown. "First you disappoint me, and then you reject what I offer you to make up for your own lost opportunity."

"Do you mean the house-party?" said Anna, with a shrug of her shoulders.

"I mean," he said thunderingly, "that, when you have made a grave blunder and suffer from it, you are to blame yourself and not your home life!"

"What blunder are you talking about?" said Anna, tossing back her head. "I see no blunder. Do you think that I would undo a single thing I did in that episode, that I would unsay a single word? Do you think, because I dislike the present, that I would undo the past?"

MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA

"I think that you would," he replied. "I know that you would, only you are too stubborn to admit it. You are spoiled and willful—I always said you were. And if you are going to sulk for the rest of the summer, Sarah and I will have to have guests all the time in self-defense."

"I don't mind your having guests," said Anna.

"I dare say you don't!" mocked her father. "So that you can hide on the rocks with a novel or run round the country alone. No—it is the duty of my daughter to keep an open house, and you are going to do your duty as long as you are under my roof. If you are dissatisfied with my house—why you can look for another diplomat!"

There was a roar and fury within Anna's soul, like the roar and fury of the storm outside. And the waves and the wind were calling. She rushed out of the room, and in her thin dress, stopping only to throw over it a scarf that happened to lie on a chair, she ran out into the chill, damp night. The surf towered like a grand white dragon in the blackness, that crouched as it fell on the beach and rose up again in a furious rhythm.

"The sea! The sea!" Anna cried again, and into that cry she poured all her passion. She ran down the slope of the lawn, then along the wet beach, near the edge of the thundering tide. She ran without effort, driven swiftly along, while the wind whistled in her ears. When she reached the rock, she climbed it, though it was slippery, and she had to crawl on her hands and knees. But she could not stop here; she must reach the summit of the rock and look down from the height on the raging ocean below.

"Oh——!" Her foot slipped on a cluster of wet sea-

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

weed, her ankle turned, and she fell on the hard stone and slid down the slippery rock, inevitably, toward the sea, till a sharp crag held her fast. Then Anna lost her senses for a moment, and, when she regained them, a fierce pain held her fixed on the crag.

"It is broken—my ankle!" a blurred voice murmured within her. "I can't call for help! The tide is coming! They won't find me! The tide is coming!"

For the sea gurgled beneath her and lapped the rock on which she lay.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TRAINED NURSE

ANNA was tracing the pattern on her wall-paper, little garlands of rose-buds that intertwined rhythmically and never seemed to end. Meanwhile, she was pleasantly aware of the irresistible whiteness of the room: all the wood-work was white, the chairs, the curtains, the frills on the dressing-table, the cool linen on her bed. The starched cap and apron of the trained nurse were white almost to excess, and her handsome, bright face beneath the sleek, golden hair thrilled Anna with a sense of immaculate coolness and balm.

"How is the pain now?" asked the nurse in a voice like a bell.

"Oh, Miss Norwood," said Anna gayly, "it is just floating off gradually. I don't mind it at all. In fact, it is rather exciting to have a pain. It's a novelty."

"You mustn't talk so much," the nurse said calmly, "or your fever will come again."

"I had great fun in that fever!" Anna exclaimed. "I had visions— Oh! I thought I was a mermaid dancing with sea-monsters on the bottom of the sea. Why, you know, Miss Norwood, when I try to recall that night of my accident, it is just as vague to me as those dreams in my fever. I don't know how long I lay there on the rock, whether it was ten minutes or three hours; and when I heard the voices of our chauffeur and the gar-

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

deners, they were quite ghostly, and when they lifted me up and carried me home by jerks over the slippery rock and beach, I felt as though I were being drawn down into the sea. It was only when I saw my father in his drenched overcoat—his face deadly pale—that everything was clear to me, and then when Aunt Sarah——”

“Now please don’t talk,” Miss Norwood interrupted firmly. “I should so like to have you sleep a little before I renew that bandage.”

“I suppose I shall have to obey,” said Anna with a resigned sigh, “but you know I’m not used to obeying.”

Then Anna closed her eyes and, lulled by an exquisite languor, she soon fell asleep. When she awoke, Aunt Sarah was tripping about the room, smoothing a pillow here, straightening a table-cloth there, an elderly fairy of kind usefulness.

“Your father is coming up to see you, dear,” she chirped pleasantly. “He has been telephoning from the office every hour for these three days, and I have been so happy to give him satisfactory news every time. I hear him coming now!”

Anna felt considerable suspense about the meeting with her father. When she had seen him before, since her mysterious arrival in the arms of the chauffeur and the gardener, she had been in a feverish state of indifference. But now the fever had abated, and her mind was clear.

“Well, Anna!” said Mr. Borden, sitting down beside the bed. “How are you to-day, my child?”

There was an awkward cheerfulness in his voice which did not escape Anna and she saw with astonishment the dark circles under his eyes and his unnatural pallor.

“You gave us quite a scare,” he continued in the same

THE TRAINED NURSE

voice, "but you seem to be getting on well. Is the fever quite gone, Miss Norwood?"

He turned to the nurse, who was sitting serenely in a corner.

"It is still one hundred," Miss Norwood replied.

Mr. Borden nodded gravely.

"And how is the pain in your ankle?" he asked Anna with ill-hidden concern.

"Gone!" cried Anna triumphantly, though, in fact, the pain was just coming back with tantalizing twitches.

But Anna was alarmed by the worn, exhausted look on her father's face, so that she would not worry him further; and, as she studied the lines on his face, a sudden idea shot into her mind. Could he have thought that she had been trying to drown herself?

The idea was absurd, ridiculous, and yet her father, with all his practical sense, had a bold imagination, and he might have been reproaching himself all the time for the scene which had caused her to run out into the cold night, and accusing himself with frightful suffering. Anna felt pity for her strong, commanding father, and at the same time a secret wicked sense of power.

When Mr. Borden was gone, Anna asked Aunt Sarah: "Did father worry more than necessary?"

"I suppose he did," said Aunt Sarah, looking down, as though she wanted to avoid Anna's glance. "But he doesn't any more. How could he, when Miss Norwood is taking such good care of you!" she exclaimed with an engaging smile at the nurse, and fluttered out of the room.

"Do you want me to read 'St. Agnes' Eve' to you again?" asked Miss Norwood.

"Ah, how well you guess my secret wishes!" Anna

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

exclaimed. "You never seem to tire of reading aloud—your voice never shrivels up toward the end of a story. Tell me now, Miss Norwood, don't you ever get bored?"

"Bored—with such a lively patient as you! Why, I have my hands full."

"But—don't you ever get cross?" Anna asked on.

"Oh, yes," said the nurse, "very often. Then I work desperately hard out of spite."

She laughed merrily, and her bright blue eyes twinkled. But Anna sank back in her pillows and sighed.

"Why are you sighing?" asked the nurse.

"I feel very idle," said Anna, with mock humility.

"You have a perfect excuse to be idle," Miss Norwood returned.

"Oh, my dear Miss Norwood!" cried Anna. "I am idle all the time, in sickness and health."

"You are talking too much again!" the nurse insisted. "I shall have to begin on 'St. Agnes' Eve'!"

The blonde nurse walked into the next room and returned with a vase full of glowing crimson roses.

"You may have these now that your fever is gone," she said and brought in bowls with mignonettes, heliotropes and nasturtiums, a flower-garden of greetings from solicitous friends. Then she drew up a chair nearer to Anna's bed, and began in her clear, bell-like voice:

"St. Agnes' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was!"

So the days in the white, sunny room passed in cheerful tranquillity and Anna's illness—the result of the shock from her fall and of the chill that had gripped her on the cold, wet rock—was gone after a week. The broken ankle remained, now in a plaster bandage, but Anna was

THE TRAINED NURSE

allowed to sit up, first by the open window in her bedroom, then on the wide balcony that extended from her boudoir.

As she was still weak, she took a keen delight in the languid hours of basking in the sunshine and watching the changes of tint and motion on the sparkling sea.

"*Il dolce far niente!*" she murmured to herself, as she sat alone, with her unopened book in her lap. When she turned round, she saw Miss Norwood standing beside her with a handful of sea-shells.

"I brought you these from the beach," she said brightly; her cheeks were ruddy from the brisk salt wind.

"Ah, shells for the baby!" cried Anna. "How did you know I liked to play with them? Dear me, I am really growing into an infant again. You would think I had broken my skull!"

"It is good for you to be childish!" said the nurse. "There is plenty of time yet to be grown up."

"I know," said Anna pensively. "And I dread being myself again. I love this bovine state now—but when I wake up, I know I shall do something wild."

"Why?" asked Miss Norwood innocently.

"Oh," said Anna mysteriously, "when my strength comes back—I know it will be like the strength of Samson, and I will do something desperate."

Anna's strength came back, day by day, and, as it increased, she grew more and more restless; but she was still exiled to the balcony. The nurse was now practically superfluous, but she remained as companion to Anna, for, as Aunt Sarah said:

"Your father thought you needed some one of your

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

own age to help you while away your time up here on the balcony. And I think he is right. With nobody but an old thing like me round all the time, you would get fidgety."

One afternoon, when the horizon was broken by numberless white sails, while the sea-wind blew sparkling ripples over the deep blue water, and Anna's pulse throbbed once more with the old restlessness of the sea, she said suddenly:

"Tell me, Clare, what are the worst cases at the hospital where you studied?"

The nurse had turned from Miss Norwood, the professional, into Clare, the friend.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed. "How can I answer such a question? There were so many different kinds——"

"I mean," said Anna, "which did you mind most?"

"Well, the harder the cases were," the nurse replied, "the more I enjoyed them. There is nothing like seeing a patient whom you have almost given up get well after all."

"But do you ever see them again," asked Anna pensively, "after they leave the hospital?"

Clare Norwood shook her head.

"That's the sad part," she said wistfully. "Very rarely we see them again. I used to grow so fond of the little children in the tuberculosis ward. But when they would be cured, their mothers would come and carry them away, and perhaps take them to see us a few times the first year—but then we would never see them again."

Anna was silent for a moment, then asked abruptly: "How long is the course in that hospital?"

"Four years," answered Clare, "and it is hard, too."

THE TRAINED NURSE

"Do you—do you have to scrub floors?" asked Anna. "And do all sorts of menial labor?"

"We did have to scrub floors when I entered," the nurse explained, "but I believe they are doing away with that now. But, dear me! that isn't the hardest part; the hard part is to keep your mind on what you are doing, and not to pour out a drop of medicine too much, even though it is midnight, and you have been standing for hours, and your legs are floating away from you."

"But you say you enjoyed it——?" mused Anna.

"I think I did, after all," Clare replied.

"It must have given you a thrill," said Anna. "To see full-grown human beings depend on you absolutely, and to look upon you as a kind of seraph. And to know that by one drop of medicine more you could poison your patient——"

"A nice seraph that!" laughed Clare Norwood; but Anna was serious.

"Tell me," she commanded, "how you came to be a nurse at all."

"Well, if you really want to hear——" the nurse began with some hesitation.

"Yes, I do want to hear——" said Anna firmly. "Really!"

And Clare Norwood took out her sewing and told the story of her life:

"Well, I had four sisters—that is the main point—and we lived in a little town in Maine. My oldest sister helped my mother keep house, and the two youngest were away at school, and my other sister Mollie and I were left at home with nothing to do but mend our clothes and go to card-parties. We were just well off enough not to have to do anything, and it never occurred

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

to us to go away to study after school, because we had all gone to boarding-school and that kept us away from home three years. My father was a peaceful sort of man, who didn't care for traveling, and my mother had her friends and her Woman's club, and so we were rooted fast in the gossipy little place. Perhaps I should still be sitting there, this minute, if Mollie hadn't got engaged. Then I thought I couldn't stand this dull life alone—my oldest sister was considerably older, and the youngest ones were still at school—and I thought I would simply have to do something. Then, one summer, a Canadian girl with whom I went to school, came to visit me, and she told me that she was going to a hospital in New York and study to be a trained nurse. You know, a great many nurses are Canadian! And this girl was so enthusiastic about the career, and made me so enthusiastic, too, that I decided to go with her. Of course, father and mother didn't like the idea at all in the beginning, and all the town thought I was crazy. But my sister Mollie stood up for me, and that Canadian girl was so eloquent about the glory of a nurse's life, that they let me go at last. And now—I don't mind saying it!—they are proud of me, and I haven't regretted a minute that I went!"

Anna had listened intensely, with her eyes fixed on the radiant, healthy face of her companion.

"All that is thrilling to me," she said with a mysterious emphasis that made Clare Norwood look up at her with a puzzled glance. But Anna remained silent for several minutes, while Clare sewed busily and the surf murmured in its monotonous rhythm.

"I want to be a trained nurse, too!" Anna cried at last, passionately, violently, like a challenge to the sea.

THE TRAINED NURSE

Clare Norwood dropped her work, and stared.

"You——!" she gasped.

"Why not?" challenged Anna.

The nurse hesitated.

"You—you live in this beautiful house," she began.

"You are the mistress of it—you are an only child—you can have anything you want—you travel—you know many interesting people—you entertain—you have such a rich, varied life——"

"Oh, it's a vile life, I tell you!" Anna interrupted. "It's as idle and superfluous as the life of that grasshopper on your sleeve!"

"But your father adores you," ventured Clare. "What would he say?"

Anna laughed recklessly.

"That is the question!" she cried. "What will he say!"

"Well, I have never met anyone like you with all my experience," said the nurse, shaking her head. "And your aunt will think I have put wild ideas into your head."

"No," said Anna firmly, "it isn't your fault. I have a friend, Ruth Gregory—the one who sent me the heliotropes—and she is going to organize—" Anna had to stop an instant to recall what it was that Ruth was going to organize—"she is going to organize a home for destitute and crippled children."

"Oh," said Clare blandly. "And you want to be like her?"

"No!" cried Anna in a voice trembling with excitement. "You can't understand. It is neither you nor Ruth—perhaps it is both!—but if you and she had not come my way, some one else would have come to point

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

out my destination. It was all prepared within me, only I did not know exactly what! But I know now. I must go away, I must go and do something, some service, heal wounds, Clare, or count drops of medicine, or bind the ankles of crippled children!"

Clare Norwood looked at Anna a long while in rapt amazement.

"I really believe you could do it!" she said at last with conviction. And Anna clasped her hand in rapture.

From that moment on, Clare Norwood had no peace from answering Anna's passionately eager questions about the details of the course for trained nurses, the life at the hospital, and the terms for entrance. Anna's first question in the morning and her last words at night began with the same prelude: "When I shall be at the hospital——" and Clare always ended her patient explanations with the refrain: "But what will your father say?" And both were wrapped in a veil of secrecy.

Meanwhile Anna's ankle was constantly improving till she could walk freely, and the day came when Clare Norwood had no imaginable excuse for staying.

"Now you must come to see me as soon as your next case permits," said Anna as she rode with Clare to the station. "And you must write anyway. Oh, I have so many questions still to ask!"

"You have the main question still to ask, I should say," answered Clare. "But not of me."

Anna laughed.

"I will ask it to-day," she declared, "as soon as I come home."

"And if your father refuses?" asked Clare.

"Why then," said Anna, shrugging her shoulders, "I

THE TRAINED NURSE

shall simply have to run away! Oh, there's your train! Thank you a thousand times, my rescuing angel—thank you a thousand, thousand——”

Clare was hurried into the train, which rolled off immediately, and Anna waved her hand till she had lost sight of the nurse's golden hair.

“Home, Charlie!” she said brusquely to the chauffeur who was waiting for her with a submissive smile which, however, still betrayed a triumphant reminiscence of the night when he had snatched her from treacherous waves and carried her home in his arms—her, whom he had to drive home decorously in the motor-car. But Charlie's smile, though it did not escape her, could not amuse Anna as it had done before, because she was pre-occupied with steeling her mind for the encounter with her father.

Mr. Borden was strolling on the lawn in front of the porch, smoking leisurely, standing still, now and then, to look over the calm, light blue sea.

“I hate to break his peace with a blow!” said Anna to herself, as she watched him from the veranda. “But I must—this moment or never!”

She stepped down to the lawn and strolled beside him.

“So your blonde friend Miss Norwood is gone!” he said in a kindly voice. “Well—I am glad she has left you walking so lightly! You are as strong now as you ever were, aren't you, Anna?”

“Oh, much stronger than before!” cried Anna. “Why, I have stored up so much strength all those weeks on the balcony when I did nothing but blink at the sea, that I shall have to do something great with it, or my pent-up energy will explode like dynamite!”

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"Well, well," said her father pleasantly. "I trust it isn't as bad as that."

"Yes, it is!" cried Anna passionately, roused by her father's calm. "And I might as well tell you now. I have something to tell you that will hurt you—but I can't help it—I must tell you—and it will be a relief to have it over!"

"What have you been pondering about now?" said Mr. Borden in an expectant tone, while his serene brow was beginning to cloud. "Come up on the veranda!"

On the porch Mr. Borden sat down on a rocking-chair, but Anna remained standing, leaning against a veranda post, opposite her father. She knew that, however numerous the trials of her new career might be, this task of persuading her father was the hardest; and she trembled.

"You won't like my plan at first," she began, "but you will some day. You don't want me to be unhappy, do you?"

Anna felt that this prelude was unworthy; she had meant to begin with suffering humanity, and now she was pleading for her happiness! But, after all, would her father have suffering humanity as much at heart as the happiness of his child?

"Come to the point!" said Mr. Borden, with smothered impatience.

"Oh, I want to be a trained nurse like Clare!" Anna cried out, and gave a sigh of relief.

"You are fooling!" her father remonstrated gruffly.

"No, I am in deep earnest!" Anna returned, while her eyes glowed and her face was violently flushed. "You see, I have been vegetating four whole years, and when I ask myself: 'What have you done all these four

THE TRAINED NURSE

years?' I must say: 'Nothing!' ——I don't want to be idle! Why should I be idle now?"

Anna's father looked at her sternly with his dark, gloomy eyes.

"Idle!" he repeated, and there was a world of reproach in his voice. "Do I want you to be idle? Do you need to be idle in a house like mine? Was your mother idle? Aren't you the daughter of a widower, and an only child?"

"But entertaining and traveling and flitting round the house is no real work," Anna went on, in a voice vibrating with eagerness. "It is all so private!"

"You want to go into public life, eh?" sneered Mr. Borden, and added bitterly: "And leave your father alone. And do you think that the hospitals are waiting for Miss Anna Borden?"

"No," said Anna ardently. "I know they aren't waiting for me, but they will be glad to have me, and I know I shall do well!"

"You have never betrayed any talent for nursing!" remarked Mr. Borden.

"That makes no difference," said Anna firmly. "It is the spirit that counts. You see," she appealed in a low, veiled voice, "I have just been ill; so I know what it means to have pain. And I want to heal some of the pain in the world."

Mr. Borden's face was ash-gray, and his sinister eyes gleamed with a smoldering glance. He was silent, and Anna thought of her father's face as she had seen it the first night at her bed-side after her fever, and of the secret sense of power which had thrilled her then. And in this moment she was seized again with that wicked sense of might: she knew that at the end her father

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

would relent, because he was fearing another violent, injurious whim of hers, like the one of the night when she fell on the cold rock.

"I cannot believe yet that you are serious," he said heavily. "If you are—it is too cruel!"

"Cruel?" echoed Anna, in open astonishment.

A vision sank upon her ardent mind, like a mirage on the sea. She saw her father come home from business on a dark autumn night and call her and, hearing no response, sink into his armchair with the gloomy, brooding look that she knew so well. And, with a torturing pang, Anna understood that she was cruel.

"Even though I am cruel," she cried desperately, while tears were actually dimming her sight, "remember that all saints and martyrs have been called cruel by the families they have left."

"You are neither a saint nor a martyr," said her father unmoved. "You are nothing but a capricious child. You a trained nurse! You have no idea of the work required. After the first day, you would simply run away! Why, you have never swept a floor in your life!"

"I know I haven't," said Anna, piqued. "But sweeping isn't the main point."

"Now I happen to know something about hospitals," her father continued. "Perhaps you don't know that I helped to endow— Oh well, you wouldn't be likely to have noticed it in the paper; you were so busy with heroic plans!"

There was a bitterness in his tone that made Anna's spirits faint. Dully she watched the sea for a while, the on-sweep of the murmuring tide and its recoil in rhythmic monotony. Soon these painful obstacles at home would be swept away, as the tide was sweeping away the sea-

THE TRAINED NURSE

weed and star-fish on the beach. No longer fettered by family ties, she would be leaning over the sick-bed of a strange sufferer, armed with the immaculate cap and apron, the uniform of the heroic servitors. Trembling with this vision, she cried in an inspired, clarion voice:

"Don't you see! I am going to leave for a bigger life. I am going to step out of this petty little life of mine into the real world. And I am going to work! Work—why aren't you glad with me? You lie awake thinking about your business—you said so often! Do you lose sleep over a dinner invitation? Why do you make me the keeper of your frills?"

"When does this course begin?" Anna's father asked abruptly.

"In September," answered Anna. "Next month."

"Next month!" cried Mr. Borden. "Are you mad?"

"That's why I am in a hurry to have your consent," Anna explained. "I have to write my application soon!"

"Go upstairs, and lock yourself up in your room for an hour," said her father solemnly. "And think over what you have been saying, and consider what you would be giving up if you really went away, and what hardships you would have to face."

Touched by the sudden mildness of his hitherto impatient tone, Anna obeyed.

"I shall go and think it over as you say," she said blandly. "But I know I cannot change my mind."

On the way to her room she met Aunt Sarah on the stairs, with a pink silk sewing-bag dangling from her arm.

"What's the matter?" asked Aunt Sarah, in her fluttering manner. "You look excited. Has anything happened?"

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"Nothing has happened yet," said Anna dramatically. "But something is going to happen——"

"Dear me—what?" chirped the bewildered little lady.

"Wait till to-night!" said Anna mysteriously. "Father sent me to my room to think it over. It is nothing alarming, Aunt Sarah—don't look so frightened! It really only concerns me!"

Anna felt the timid gray eyes follow her to the door of her boudoir, and she wondered with misgiving how poor, dear Aunt Sarah would grasp her new enterprise.

In the seclusion of her room, Anna re-read the prospectus of the Montrose Hospital of New York that Clare Norwood had given her, including the questions asked of the applicant concerning height, weight, physical condition, previous education, references—innumerable queries that thrilled Anna with their important bearing on her career. Two months she would have to be a probationer, and at the end of the two months the hospital authorities would decide whether she were fit to be a real nurse and, if accepted, she would then have to pledge herself to stay the remainder of the three years. It was all important, responsible, thrilling! As she read the course of instruction for probationers, the list of lectures on anatomy, physiology and bacteriology delighted her less than the prospect of coming immediately in contact with the poor patients. She did not want to learn, but she wanted to minister; she wanted to touch the fevered hand of the stranger and smooth the pillow of the sick and the distressed.

"Oh, my beloved unknown!" she cried out aloud, and the warm tears ran down her cheeks. She buried her face in her arms, and sobbed with ecstasy and joy.

There was a knock at the door; Lizzy, the maid,

THE TRAINED NURSE

popped in her head and out again. Anna started as she realized that instead of examining her enterprise she had embraced it with passion and tears. She washed her eyes strenuously before she called Lizzy to help her into the white chiffon dress which, she reflected, with a thrill, she would soon never wear again. But when she came down into the dining-room, where her father and Aunt Sarah were already seated, she knew by their looks that her tear-stains were not effaced. The presence of the butler brought the strained silence on this dining-room: the soup spoon was shaking in Aunt Sarah's trembling hand, and Mr. Borden was staring at the still life of grapes and lemons on the wall opposite him. As soon as the family was left alone for a minute, Aunt Sarah moaned:

"You have been crying—I see you have! Oh, Anna, you're not going to do it! Your father told me— Oh, I see you are sorry to go away!"

But the indiscreet world in the form of James, the butler, made a reply impossible. During the gloomy dinner, the thunder-cloud was gathering more and more darkly for the final torrent, while Anna was wondering what Aunt Sarah would say if she knew that her wild niece had not been crying in repentance.

Safe in the library, the quivering little lady burst out: "You've gotten over it, Anna, haven't you? Say you have!"

Anna shook her head.

"I am sorry," she said meekly, "but I have not."

"You mean you'll—you'll just go away and leave your family," stammered Aunt Sarah.

"I shall come home in vacation," said Anna soothingly.

"I might go to a hospital in Boston, but I thought New

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

York would be better, because people would talk less when I'll be gone. Besides, the training-school that Clare Norwood went to appeals to me."

"Oh, that Clare Norwood!" muttered Aunt Sarah, with as much of a threat as her little voice could hold. "I wish she had never come into this house!"

"There is no need to wish that at all," said Anna. "I wanted to go away and do something before I was ill."

"You've been abroad two years," said Aunt Sarah, reproachfully shaking her head. "You might be content to stay at home!"

"Aunt Sarah said," Mr. Borden broke his gloomy silence, "that you have no idea of domestic affairs, that you would be quite unfit for the work required."

"You don't know how to make a bed!" Aunt Sarah ejaculated.

"It isn't the practice that counts," said Anna firmly. "It is the spirit."

"You'll have to get up at six," Aunt Sarah went on, staring in front of her as though she beheld an infernal vision. "You'll probably room with two or three others whom you can't stand, you'll have to sweep and dust—You'll break down after a week!"

"I'll break down if I don't go," replied Anna, "from the crushing weight of empty space."

"And——" continued Aunt Sarah, shivering, "you will have to wash—oh, dear, have you thought of the dirty people——"

"Yes, I have!" cried Anna, rising in her ardor. "And I love those dirty people!"

"Love before first sight!" laughed her father grimly, then frowned and said with stern determination: "You

THE TRAINED NURSE

are welcome to the dirt—but have you thought of the contagious diseases?”

Aunt Sarah gave a sharp cry and held up her hands in horror.

“That is the real point,” Mr. Borden went on. “I will not subject my one child to mortal infection. Though you may want to break loose from me, I shall still assert my authority when it is a matter of life and death.”

“Diphtheria!” cried Aunt Sarah shrilly. “And small-pox! And all kinds of terrible consumption.”

“Why should I be infected?” said Anna, smiling, “when there are—how many nurses in the country? Let me run up and look at the statistics!”

“No, stay and sit down,” commanded her father, “and listen to reason!”

And Anna listened to reason till late at night, and every night of the week; but her soul was not with the reason. Once in a while, some well-beloved corner of the house—the stairs to the attic where she had played hide-and-seek with Ruth and other children, the balcony where she had mused in many a spangled dream in the summer before she left for Paris, her own white, cheerful room or a contemplative nook in the library—shot a quick pang through her heart as she realized that these daily delights must be forsaken. More often her father’s deep, pain-laden voice and poor Aunt Sarah’s timid complaints haunted her through her dreams and sometimes even chased away her sleep.

But the sight of the hospital prospectus armed her each morning against the eloquence exerted to dissuade her from the cherished task. Defense was necessary, for Aunt Sarah and her father, after they had once con-

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

jured up the specter of a terrible infectious disease, clung to it as to their most powerful weapon, and it seemed to Anna as if a leper with glassy eyes were staring at her from the head of the stairs and in every shadowy corner.

Meanwhile the season had reached the middle of August, and the day came when Anna could not postpone the writing of her application.

"Father!" she said at the house-door in the morning, just before Mr. Borden was going to step into his car, "I have to write my application this morning. I know you have given up persuading me. You came very near yielding openly last night. I was sure you had made up your mind to let me go. I must write to-day. You know I shall be desperate if I don't go. Come now, do give me your consent!"

Anna's father looked at her with a frightful look that made him seem ten years older than a minute ago; then he bowed his head in silent consent, and left the house.

For a moment Anna stood rooted to the floor, paralyzed by the hated sight of her father's grief. But, as she realized that, after all, she now had his consent, she raced upstairs into her room, and closed the door. As she sat down at her maple-wood desk and took out her monogram paper, she glanced with scorn at the silver writing-set, the paper-weights in fanciful shapes, the little Tiffany vases. In the hospital she would write at a plain table without knick-knacks, she would sleep in a small iron bed in a tiny room; her fare would be plain, her dress the starched uniform! It was with the thrill of the explorer, who dreams in his smug home of night-rides over glaciers, that Anna wrote her application with a firm dashing hand. And, as she signed her name, it

THE TRAINED NURSE

seemed to her that she could no longer be "Anna Borden," that she had been transformed into a creature of some higher order, a seraph with snow-white wings, or a saint with immaculate apron and cap!

CHAPTER VI

ANNA AS NOVICE

ANNA turned away from the window of the ten o'clock train to New York, and leaned back in her chair. Free at last! Now even the tear-stained, pointed face of Aunt Sarah, who had stood waving her little handkerchief frantically, and the grim parting kiss of her father belonged to a chapter completed, and before her lay the new life, veiled, but glorious in its mystery. The ordeals of the last two weeks were over—the forced cheerfulness in the house, the spasmodic outbursts of reproach, the worries, the admonitions—and, like a true knight-errant, she would not look back, but forward to hardship and adventure. Out of her suitcase she took the "Life of Florence Nightingale," and as she read the life-history of the pioneer nurse, visions of herself in the different heroic situations stole into her eager mind.

When Anna looked up from her book, after reading for three intense hours, she noticed, a few chairs away from hers, a friend of her father's, a Mr. Lloyd, whom she had often entertained, and an hour later, when she was walking back to her seat from the dining-car, she met him in the aisle.

"How do you do, Miss Borden!" said the pleasant, smooth-shaven gentleman. "Are you going on a little visit to New York?"

"No," said Anna, with a reckless desire to startle the

ANNA AS NOVICE

bland conventional questioner. "I am going to enter the Montrose Hospital in New York as a nurse."

Mr. Lloyd had to clutch the back of the nearest chair, while his face struggled to retain a polite calm.

"Was that a sudden decision?" he gasped.

"Fairly sudden," said Anna. "I see you are shocked."

"Not at all," replied Mr. Lloyd glibly. "I admire your courage."

When Anna was lounging in her chair again, she wondered what all her friends at home were thinking. She had written farewell letters to Ruth and to a number of others, who were all scattered at their different summer resorts; only the Hamiltons she had left uninformed. Anna almost laughed aloud, as she pictured the sneering face that Mrs. Hamilton would make if she knew, and Natalie's upturned nose.

The last chapter of "Florence Nightingale" was not quite finished when the negro porter offered to dust Anna's coat, and in ten minutes she was rushing for a cab at the Grand Central Station. With pride she said to the cabman:

"To the Montrose Hospital."

It seemed to Anna that her heart had never beat as fast as on this ride through the bustling, crowded business streets of New York—not before the most exacting festivity in Berlin at which she herself had been hostess. She wondered if perhaps her first day at school had been like this—but no: school had been preluded gently by kindergarten, and, moreover, her father and mother had sent her to school with laughter and blessings. But this—this was all her own, conceived by her will, created by her strength of purpose!

The cab halted before a large, severe, square building.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"Do you want to stop at the hospital or the nurses' home?" cried the driver. Anna saw that there was a somewhat narrower, lower building, which she supposed was the nurses' home, connected with the imposing main structure.

"The nurses' home!" she called back to the driver, who, in the next minute, was carrying her little straw suit-case up the broad stone steps of Anna's mighty new home. When she rang the bell, the clanging sound thrilled her like a trumpet-blast announcing her new life, and when the massive door was opened by a cheerful maid dressed all in white, Anna said in an almost lyric voice, fraught with emotion:

"I am a new probationer. Will you show me to the Superintendent's office?"

Anna took her suit-case, and followed along the bare corridor to the Superintendent's office. Miss Thayer, the Superintendent, was writing at an orderly desk in a cheerful sunny room.

"Miss Borden, I suppose!" she said in a high, kindly voice, rising as Anna came in and extending her hand. "I am glad to welcome you here. I recognized you by the photograph you sent with your application. Have you had a tiring journey?"

Anna, who had amused Ambassadors without a tremor, felt awe-struck in the presence of this silver-haired woman with the mild, kindly face and keen gray eyes, who had mounted to the heights of the lofty career toward which she herself was now making the first step. Nevertheless, although she was awed, she spoke to the Superintendent with unconcealed ardor.

"I will let Bessie show you to your room," said Miss Thayer. "Some other probationers arrived earlier in the

ANNA AS NOVICE

day, and a few are coming to-night. Your room-mate is Miss Dora Arnold, a Massachusetts girl, too, so I trust you will be good friends. She is in the ward now, but you will meet her at dinner to-night. You may put on your working dress now, and then come down again, and I will show you about the home and introduce you to the head-nurse of your ward."

The word "may" impressed Anna especially with the seriousness of the situation: no woman, not even Aunt Sarah, had said "you may" to her since she was grown up. With an elevating sense of voluntary servitude, Anna took her suit-case again and followed Bessie up a broad staircase, then along another narrow corridor to one of a long row of doors. This Bessie opened after a short knock and left Anna to her fate. The room was small and plain, but not forbidding: the white walls and the sunlit, curtainless windows were cheerful, and the furniture, consisting of two small white iron beds, two bureaus, two simple writing-tables and a few wooden chairs, was effective in its unadorned utility. Anna went to the open window and looked down into the crowded street where a chauffeur and a teamster were shouting at each other directly beneath her, then turned back to look round in the little room and gave a sigh of satisfaction. At last she was here, safe from family opposition, here to stay for three tense years of service! This new home of hers, inclosed in four, short, white walls, which she had even to share with a stranger, was radiant in her eyes with a beauty hitherto unknown to Anna, a symbolic beauty reflecting the serenity and rigor of a nurse's life.

Anna opened her suit-case, and took out the blue-and-white striped cotton dress that she was to wear as pro-

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

bationer till she should be privileged to wear the hospital uniform as accepted nurse. As she put on the strange, unadorned garment, she reflected with pride that into her trunk she had packed no jewelry, no ornate gowns, for she was determined not to call on her New York acquaintances, lest they should distract her with invitations and mar the harmony of her new life; and when she saw in the mirror her own dark-eyed excited face set off by the severe attire that she had always associated with faultless, tranquil blondes, she could not help laughing at the novelty and adventurousness of her situation. But withal she was passionately in earnest.

When she came down again to the Superintendent's office, Miss Thayer's face was a little more sober than before, a little more matter-of-fact. Anna was shown first into the large drawing-room, a bare, cold construction with numerous wicker chairs and tables, monotonous rugs on the shining floor, and prints of "The Angelus," Reynolds' "Angels' Heads" and other familiar pictures. Anna was determined, however, not to find fault with her new surroundings, and her optimism was rewarded by the cheerful effect of the small library for the use of nurses, with its glass bookcases, more massive furniture, sofa cushions and rugs of warmer tones. Anna imagined herself reading poetry there in the evening after the day's hard work, with a delicious fatigue. Then came the class-rooms, sober and regular, and the amphitheater for the lectures and demonstrations by the hospital physicians. Rembrandt's "Anatomy" was the only ornament of this impressive hall, and the other pictures were colored anatomical diagrams; in the place of busts and statues Anna gazed on skeletons. She followed the Superintendent in silence and listened to her expla-

ANNA AS NOVICE

nations meekly, lest she should betray how unaccustomed she was to haunts of useful activity. But when they reached the cooking laboratory, with its row of small gas stoves and an orderly outfit of shining pans and kettles, she could not keep back an outcry of surprise.

"Are we going to learn cooking?" she asked.

"Yes, invalid cooking," answered Miss Thayer. "Have you ever tried to cook at home?"

"No," said Anna frankly. "But I should love to learn!"

In fact, Anna was thrilled by the idea of learning such an elemental art, an art which she had hitherto taken for granted, and she saw in the cooking laboratory the mysterious work-shop of an alchemist compounding the elixir of life.

"And now," said the Superintendent, as she led Anna into an underground passage, "I shall take you to the women's medical ward, where you shall serve your first month, and introduce you to your head nurse, Miss Agnes Leighton. She may give you some light tasks to-day, so that you may get into the spirit of the work; and to-morrow your routine life will begin."

Anna felt that now, indeed, the serious beginning of her new life had come and, remembering what Clare Norwood had told her about the unquestioned authority of the head nurse in her ward, she wondered with frantic suspense what sort of human or superhuman being she would find Miss Agnes Leighton. On the threshold of the women's medical ward Anna halted a moment, dazzled: two long symmetrical rows of beds, white, immaculate, bearing patients who lay in oppressive silence; nurses flitting noiselessly over the shining floor; a desk in the middle of the long narrow hall,

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

where a nurse was writing, and a medicine closet at the end, gleaming with glass. One nurse was bending over the nearest bed, taking a thermometer out of the dry lips of a haggard woman who was staring at Anna with glassy, fevered eyes. When the nurse had finished writing down something on a chart, the Superintendent approached her, telling Anna to follow. The nurse assumed the suddenly erect posture of a soldier in the presence of his officer and turned upon Anna an angelic look of benign welcome as the Superintendent said:

"This is another new probationer, Miss Anna Borden—your head nurse, Miss Agnes Leighton. Miss Leighton will introduce you to the staff of this ward and show you your work. I am sure she will be glad to help you in every way."

As Anna looked upon the fair, frail, oval face of the head nurse, with the sad gray eyes and smiling lips that seemed to defy the natural sadness, she determined that she would adore this Agnes Leighton and set her upon a pedestal like an embodied ideal till she should herself acquire an aspect so benign, even as the worshiper of the great Stone Face by adoration turned into the image of his idol.

"I hope you will like your work," said Agnes Leighton simply. "I will show you round here a bit."

As Anna followed her serene guide along the aisle between the solemn rows of beds, she looked with hungry curiosity at the faces on the pillows, that were either staring back at her or gazing blankly at space or resting with eyes closed. There was an old, shriveled woman who was moving her lips uncouthly without a sound as she watched Anna go by; a young girl with sunken cheeks and a feverish light in great, wide open eyes

ANNA AS NOVICE

seemed to regard Anna with envy—perhaps for the use of her limbs? One hideously flushed middle-aged woman, with a compress on her forehead, was moaning and tossing restlessly on her pillow; a frail creature of ghostly pallor was lying motionless, though with open eyes, as if frozen in her bed. All were sad: Anna had not known that there could be so much sadness aggregated in one room. And yet her own spirits were buoyed up by a strange cheerfulness, such as she had not felt before. The nurses to whom Agnes Leighton introduced her seemed cheerful, too, and in no wise reflected the dreariness of their surroundings. There were a ruddy, black-haired senior nurse who was deftly preparing an ice-cap for a feverish patient; two junior nurses who were carrying heavy supper-trays in strong arms, one youthful and blonde, something like Clare Norwood, the other comparatively old with a pleasant, plain, unromantic face, such as Anna had sometimes seen among elderly saleswomen and milliners; and lastly Anna's fellow-probationer in her ward, a pale, insignificant-looking girl who whispered to Anna that she was "scared to death."

"I will show you the linen closet," said Agnes Leighton at the end of the long hall. "The probationers have to understand that thoroughly."

Understand the linen closet! Anna wondered what there was to understand about those white sheets that had dazzled her when she entered the ward and she drank in with rapture the mystery of her profession. The linen closet was, indeed, a complex, highly organized haunt, governed by rules and regulations like a small inanimate state. There were other mysteries, shining places where utensils were kept in faultless order and

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

medicine closets which were, however, too sacred to be explained at once to a probationer.

When Anna was given a type-written schedule of the ward-routine, the line "Ward duty from 7 A. M. till 7 P. M." made her heart beat with a battle-field exhilaration and the two hours off in the afternoon for recreation seemed almost a blot in the dazzling asceticism of the hospital day.

"You might begin practicing a bit," said Agnes Leighton, "by helping Miss Courtney give her patients their supper." And to Anna this order, given in the gentlest voice, was the trumpet-blast announcing the battle.

Miss Courtney, the meek, plain-faced junior nurse, gave Anna a tray to hold, while she was setting up a small bed-side table and adjusting it to the height of the bed. Then she turned the patient, a pale, meager young woman with large, luminous eyes, carefully toward the table and told Anna to put down the tray. The sick woman began to feed herself, but the spoon fell out of her shaking hand on to the tray with a clatter, whereupon the nurse fed her patient like a helpless child and gave her water to drink through a long tube. When Anna started to take away the tray on Miss Courtney's instruction, the woman asked in a feeble voice:

"Is this the new probationer?"

Anna's heart beat rapidly as she wondered what this woman was thinking of her, and what they all were thinking of her—the nurses and the poor dull patients, who had nothing to do but to stare at Anna Borden.

Very soon, at dinner, Anna had another début to make, before all the nurses and probationers who ate in the common dining-hall of the nurses' home. Anna had never before dined with a large gathering of women—

ANNA AS NOVICE

at least not since she had visited friends at boarding-school—and she had surely never seen a company whose evening gowns were uniforms with starched aprons and caps. Although the faces about her were for the most part cheerful and many of them laughing, the voices were never loud and the laughter was subdued. The sick-room atmosphere still enveloped these nurses even in their hour of leisure. At Anna's table sat mostly probationers whose shy, bewildered glances roused Anna's pity, for she herself felt neither shy nor bewildered, only curious, excited and eager for every new adventure. The conversation with her neighbor was, however, neither adventurous nor inspiring.

"Have you ever done any nursing?" she asked Jenny Reid, the frightened little girl whom she had met in her ward.

"No, I haven't," was the meek reply. "Have you?"

"No, but I think it will be fine work."

"It will be awfully hard."

"It won't always!"

"I don't know!"

Anna wondered why her colleague had come to the hospital at all, when she had such misgivings, but as the timid creature seemed to have no desire to continue the flow of discourse, Anna had leisure to watch her companions, and to decide whom she wanted to know. Her own room-mate she did not meet till after dinner, when Miss Thayer, the superintendent, introduced a short, stocky, red-cheeked probationer as Miss Dora Arnold. Dora Arnold giggled, shook hands with Anna briskly and assured her in a hearty, almost boyish voice:

"I'm glad to know you!"

So this was her room-mate! Anna could not decide

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

momentarily whether she was glad or not at the prospect of such a breezy companion, when she considered that her room would be the only refuge from scores of scrutinizing glances. Fifteen minutes later, when she and Dora Arnold were unpacking their trunks together, Anna was congratulating herself on having a garrulous roommate, for the continuous chattering left her no time to meditate—to meditate upon her first day at the hospital and upon her father and Aunt Sarah deserted at home. She could not even reflect on the monstrous novelty of having a room-mate—she who, from early childhood, had never shared her room with anyone. And all at once she felt a wonderful fatigue, a delicious unknown fatigue in which she reveled, which lured her to bed after a brief enthusiastic note to her father, and swiftly lulled her to sleep.

The next morning at seven the real life began, and it began with dusting and bed-making. Anna, who had never touched a dust-cloth, found herself on her knees wiping the brass legs of a bed with a moist cloth like any scrub-woman, quivering with rapture at the glory of her humble occupation. But, when it came to bed-making, Anna perceived that this was not a mere technique, but an inspired art. She watched Agnes Leighton whisk the sheets over the mattress and smooth them down with an elfin touch, and then tried to do the same with a combined effort of hands and soul, as though she were playing an exquisite sonata with difficult trills. And lo! her great effort was rewarded; the angelic Agnes Leighton nodded approval, and Anna's heart beat violently for joy. While she was practicing the newly acquired art, Anna saw that poor Jenny Reid was struggling in vain to make a bed without running round it half a dozen

ANNA AS NOVICE

times; and Anna, with mingled pity and pride, wondered if she herself had always been endowed with a latent gift for inspired bed-making.

But, as the day went on, Anna advanced from the elementary arts to the vital nursing tasks, and although she had been thrilled from her first moment in the ward, she came to be in a state of inward conflagration. She had to move weak, fretting patients from one bed to another, to bathe them, comb their hair, to feed the helpless, moaning creatures. Sometimes, when she touched the loathsome skin and inhaled the foul breath of the newcomers that she was preparing for the ward, a wave of disgust would overwhelm her for a moment; and when she was performing menial duties, an instant vision of herself sitting on her balcony with a novel, while Lizzy was preparing her tea, mocked her as strains from the mountain of Venus must have mocked *Tannhäuser* on his pilgrimage. Then Anna would clench her fists and say to herself fiercely: "I am a martyr—I am a martyr! I want to do it!"

When she had made a blunder, such as putting a utensil back into the wrong place or hurting a fretful patient when she combed her hair, Anna would be enraged with herself and the rest of the world, for she was determined to excel; but fortunately her blunders were few compared to those of Jenny Reid, and she won the coveted praise of Agnes Leighton.

Nevertheless, it was the praise from patients that thrilled Anna most and brought her nearest to the glowing essence of her Samaritan life. One day, when she was carefully ironing a patient's feverish forehead with a piece of ice wrapped in gauze, the sad, pale, young woman looked at her curiously and said:

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"You are different from the other nurses!"

"Why?" asked Anna, flushing with excitement, trembling at the mystery of her distinction.

"I don't know," said the woman feebly and closed her lustrous eyes.

Then all at once it occurred to Anna that every patient, except among the very ill, had first glanced at her with the same mysterious look of curiosity, while they seemed to take the junior and senior nurses and poor Jenny Reid for granted. As soon as her afternoon recess began, she rushed into her room and without replying to the astonished Dora Arnold's "What's the matter?" sat down at her little writing-table and snatched up her fountain-pen. She had written home twice a week regularly, glowing letters fit to impress her father and Aunt Sarah with the glory of her career, and she had written the last one this morning before breakfast. There was no point in writing again on the same day, and yet it seemed to Anna that she must write to someone or burst out in rapturous song—only not before Dora Arnold! A sudden inspiration prompted her to write:

DEAR CLARE:

I tremble when I think of what I should have done if I had not met you. I should have missed the vocation to which I was ordained. You have read my horoscope, my blonde friend, and have pointed out to me my destination. I must thank you.

Ever faithfully,

ANNA.

CHAPTER VI

BENVENUTO LUGINI

ANNA woke up one morning to the shrill call of the alarm-clock, and saw that Dora Arnold was dressed and tramping back and forth in the little room. Dora had a tantalizing way of getting up much earlier than necessary for fear of being too late.

"It's time to get up, my lady!" Anna's room-mate was chirping. "You'll be late yet; I really wonder that you never have been. Have you any letters to mail? I am going to the box with a letter to Jack——" And, chattering on, Dora whisked out of the room, and thus left Anna a few moments of precious peace. It was fortunate that her probationary term would end in two weeks: then she would have a room of her own and quiet evening hours, when she would be able to read poetry, to bathe her soul in verse after the day's drudgery! She was tired of hearing Dora prattle about brother Jack and sister Maisie and the St. Bernard dog at home. Dora was very nice and jolly, of course: at first Anna had found genuine pleasure in talking over with a youthful unspoiled soul the work and the inmates of the training-school, and to laugh, like a schoolgirl, over the frailties of some of her colleagues. But these pleasures waned, and when Dora began to draw inspiration from the past she failed to stimulate, for her horizon was bounded by the outskirts of a small New England town.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

When Anna, who wondered how this simple soul had come to choose a calling which to Anna herself had seemed high adventure, had asked her to explain the choice of her career, Dora had answered in a cheerful drawl: "Oh—I don't know! I had to do something. And I thought nursing was as good as anything else."

Anna had to get up, but she had much rather have dreamed on, for the martial joy of jumping out of bed at six o'clock had lost its keenness. And what was this haste for, this eagerness to begin the day—what had the day to offer that it should be so eagerly begun? Dusting, bed-making, washing patients, filling ice-bags and hot-water bottles, cleaning utensils—one task after another in laborious routine, solemn, punctual meals and a physician's lecture. The lectures were easy for Anna, but they did not absorb her attention. At school and in her reading she had always neglected science for the arts and letters, and it did not attract her now, merely because she wanted to relieve suffering by the work of her hands and the ardor of her soul. Anna sighed. Oh, if this were only the last week of her probationary term! Then she would have a week in the operating room, and that would be something new! The cooking-lessons in the diet-kitchen which had so impressed her with its mysterious significance on her first day had lost their novelty, and as for the new accomplishments that she was acquiring—a mustard paste was not much more thrilling than a flaxseed poultice!

"Anna!" Dora Arnold rushed into the room. "Still in bed! You lazy thing! Miss Thayer wants to see you at the office before you go to your ward. Bessie just told me outside. Isn't it exciting? I wonder what's up?"

BENVENUTO LUGINI

"I hope it will be exciting," said Anna, now wide awake. "I want excitement."

"I shouldn't want the kind of excitement that comes from Miss Thayer—no, thank you!" returned Dora.

Half an hour later, when Anna was hurrying downstairs to the superintendent's office, dark forebodings flitted like shadows across her mind: she had heard of sudden dismissals—but for what offense? Perhaps because she had laughed at Miss Courtney when a Russian woman had talked Russian at her and Miss Courtney had asked "What say?" with a ridiculously sheepish face; perhaps because she had sometimes made a wry face when put to disagreeable tasks—perhaps—and Anna's faults marched by her apprehensive mind, till she stood before Miss Thayer in her office.

"Miss Borden!" said the superintendent gravely, when Anna was seated opposite her. "I suppose you have not heard that Miss Adams, a junior nurse in the tuberculosis ward, has been taken ill?"

"No, I have not," said Anna; evidently she was not going to be dismissed!

"She will be absent for some time," Miss Thayer continued. "And we are one nurse short in her ward, so that we find ourselves forced to call upon a probationer to do her work, because no one of the nurses can be spared in the other wards just now. You are one of the probationers whom I consider fit for the post."

Anna's heart beat with the pride of being thought worthy, and with joy at the prospect of novelty.

"I must tell you, however," Miss Thayer went on, with distressing seriousness, "that two probationers have already declined because of their fear of contagion. There is, of course, always a risk in nursing contagious dis-

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

eases; but, with the proper precautions, the danger is not great. Nevertheless, I consider it my duty to give you perfect freedom in your decision."

Danger! Once more Anna felt the battlefield thrill that she had lost in her daily routine, once more she was the heroine, throbbing with the joy of adventure.

"I shall be very glad to go there," she said to Miss Thayer, and the commonplaceness of her own words made her smile.

"You seem pleased at the prospect," said the superintendent, surprised. "You may begin your work in your new ward this morning. I shall take you there."

Anna knew that most of the tuberculosis patients were out of doors, so she followed Miss Thayer in suspense to the balcony that led off from a ward on the sixth story. It was a calm, warm mid-October day, and the morning air was clear. The silhouette of New York with its severe skyscrapers touched Anna as a sight irresistibly romantic, and the idea of soaring here daily, like a swallow, above the toiling city, gave her additional joy.

"It is a men's ward," said Miss Thayer, and walked ahead to a part of the balcony which was protected on one side by a canvas wall and covered with a canvas roof, also fenced in by a high iron fence with wire netting.

"A men's ward!" Anna repeated to herself: novelty was following upon novelty, and she was in her element!

In the ward the greater part of the consumptive men were lying on steamer-chairs beside their beds; some were reading, some were talking with animation to the nurses and to each other, only very few were leaning

BENVENUTO LUGINI

back in apathy, as most of the women patients in the medical ward had done. With these men Anna would be able to talk, to find out something about their lives—above all, she would be able to cheer them, to minister to their souls as well as to their bodies!

The head nurse, Miss Pyle, did not have the angelic presence of the adored Agnes Leighton; but Anna no longer needed to adore a shining model, she knew now herself what was right and wrong in the ethics of nursing; and she would follow the square-faced, ruddy Miss Pyle only when the rules demanded obedience.

As Anna walked along the rows of beds and steamer-chairs with her new head nurse to receive instructions, she observed that the pale faces of the men were lighting up with curiosity. It seemed a livelier curiosity than that of the women in her old ward on her arrival there, for these men were beginning to wink at each other and to gesticulate. One very young man, scarcely more than a boy, she noticed especially, although he neither winked nor moved, but merely fixed upon her large, melancholy, black eyes that seemed entranced.

"That young man over there," said Miss Pyle, indicating the melancholy boy, "is Benvenuto Lugini. He doesn't suffer much generally, but he is liable to have hemorrhages; so you must be ready for one any time. We put an ice-cap on the head during hemorrhage, and a hot-water bottle at the feet."

And as the square-faced nurse went on teaching Anna how to treat the possible misfortune of Benvenuto Lugini, Anna began to hope that she would really have occasion to help this wistful boy in a crisis of his disease. And yet she did not want him to have a hemorrhage—Oh, no! Still——

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"Most of these men are Italians," said Miss Pyle. "You will find it hard to understand them."

"I know a little Italian," said Anna, with conscious pride, charmed with the prospect of intercourse which would be a mystery to the other nurses.

The boy called Benvenuto Lugini coughed several times during the morning; so Anna strained her memory in search of the Italian word for "cough," and at noon when she brought him his frugal dinner of eggs and milk, she had at her tongue's end the flourishing sentence: "*Come sta la sua tossa?*" But, seeing that in her distraction she had forgotten to put the bread and butter on the tray, she had to hurry back to the dumb-waiter in the hall with her speech unmade. When she returned to her patient with a little tray in her hand, he startled her by saying in a low, melodious voice, with a slight but quaint Italian accent: "'She brought forth butter in a lordly dish.'"

Anna nearly dropped the lordly dish in her astonishment. A poetic quotation in this well-mechanized place thrilled her as though she had seen a wild flower sprouting out of a polished floor. At first she did not know whether the line came from Shakespeare or the "Song of Solomon," till the tragic "Song of Deborah" flashed into her memory and she said with a glow of pleasure:

"My name is not Deborah; it is Anna. And I have no murderous intentions."

"Your name is Anna!" exclaimed the boy, and his black eyes were wide open and lustrous with a melancholy light. "Anna! Now I thought surely it would be Eleonora."

"Why?" gasped Anna, in amazement.

"Oh, I can't tell you yet," Anna's patient replied, with

BENVENUTO LUGINI

a boyish hesitation. "But I will tell you some time—when I know you better!"

The prospect of knowing him better suddenly charmed Anna like the prospect of listening to a symphony after hearing only the first broken but dulcet chords.

"My name is Benvenuto," the boy went on. "That means 'welcome.'"

"I bid you welcome," said Anna, and it seemed to her that she must address her patient in rhythmic speech. She was thinking hard how she could prolong her discourse, but the stout Edoardo Croce in the adjoining steamer-chair was flashing jealous glances at his neighbor's dinner-tray.

Anna's work in the new ward was more independent than in the old, and it was lighter, partly because the ward orderlies did the humbler work that she had been forced to do in the women's medical ward. So she found ample time, as she waited on her patients, to linger beside them and talk; sometimes to the old cobbler, who told her about the virtues of his peerless wife Paola, a popular milliner, sometimes with Matteo Carducci, the pessimistic barkeeper, or with Lorenzo Baffi, the fruit-seller who had once cried lustily: "Bananas!" and was now prey to a heart-rending cough. But most of all she lingered beside Benvenuto Lugini. The others seemed animated enough when she came, but his pale face lit up with a youthful glow; the others were men, and liked to be entertained, but he was a boy, and needed her cheer. Besides, she could not cease listening to his pure English speech which, in spite of the musical accent that gave her visions of olive groves, contrasted with the broken, slang-spiced jargon of the other Italians.

"How old were you when you came over from Italy?"

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

she asked him one quiet afternoon, when all was calm in the ward, and a fine rain was drizzling on to the canvas roof.

"Oh, I was nine years old," replied Benvenuto. "Nine years only! And that was ten years ago."

So Benvenuto was nineteen! Did he have father and mother? What was his work when he was well? To what stratum of society did he belong—society which, since her sojourn in the hospital, seemed to Anna infinitely more complex than she had ever dreamed in her esoteric life at home? These questions preyed on Anna's mind, till she asked cautiously:

"Did you come over alone?"

"No, I came with my father, after my mother died in Rome. She died of—of this sickness," he said, pointing to his chest, with a sad, resigned smile. "She was a beautiful actress till she was sick. My father was a fiddler, and he fiddled his way to America. He used to play in the first cabin every night in a fine dress suit that my uncle gave him, and then come down to me into the steerage and tell me about the haughty ladies up there with their jewelry, who would talk while he played."

Anna thought of the musicians on the steamer that had performed while she and Mrs. Hamilton had played cards, and for whom a subscription had been passed round at the end of the voyage.

"And is he playing still?" she asked meekly.

"Yes, he is playing with the angels," said the boy, with an ecstatic light in his eyes that made Anna start. "But on earth he fiddled in a little theater between the acts—and I blew on the trumpet."

Anna thought of his weak lungs and smiled. All this was pitiful, and yet she was happy as she had been in

BENVENUTO LUGINI

Berlin when she used to muse over the sad ascetic angels of Botticelli.

"But I did not love the trumpet," the Italian went on confidentially. "And the trumpet never loved me. And so we often had discords."

Benvenuto laughed up at Anna naïvely; then continued with a flush of eagerness on his usually pale cheeks: "But I listened to the plays every night—I listened very hard, till I knew them by heart—and I tell you, Eleonora, they were not good plays——"

"Eleonora?" repeated Anna, amazed. "That name again!"

Benvenuto's face, already flushed, was now steeped in a bright glow, and his melancholy eyes flashed lightning. Could Eleonora be this boy's beloved?

And Anna, with pouting lips and a tone slightly piqued, asked:

"Who is Eleonora?"

And Benvenuto leaned forward abruptly in his steamer-chair, and chanted with fervor:

"Eleonora, Eleonora,
Thou hast taken me away
From my calm,
With the balm
Of thy music voice to-day.

"Eleonora, Eleonora,
See thy shipwrecked lover stray
'Neath thine eyes,
Moonlit skies,
With their unrelenting sway!"

"You are a poet!" cried Anna, clapping her hands and forgetting in her delight that she was jealous of Eleonora.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

Benvenuto sank back into his pillows, fatigued from his excitement, and nodded sadly.

"Yes, I am a poet," he said quietly.

He was gazing ahead mournfully, and the old pallor had come back to his face.

"Oh, if you could only play it!" he moaned suddenly. "If you could only play it!"

"Play what?" cried Anna, amazed and mystified. "The accompaniment to your song?"

Just then Miss Pyle was sweeping across the aisle and came up to Anna.

"It is time for Mr. Baffi to have his egg-nog," she said with a crisp accent of reproach.

Anna, who had risen ceremoniously to receive the head nurse's command, turned away from her favorite patient with stifled fury, determined to talk with him even longer at the next opportunity. But Benvenuto held her back by her apron.

"Oh, please let Miss Borden stay one second longer," he besought the head nurse. "I have something to say to her—something important."

Thereupon Miss Pyle responded icily:

"Very well—but not longer than a second!" and turned away.

Then Anna bent down to Benvenuto, and he whispered in her ear:

"You are Eleonora!"

Anna throbbed with amazement and suspense, but when she raised her eyes from the ardent face of the Italian they met the cold, severe glance of Miss Pyle. So she waved a fleeting, mysterious good-bye to Benvenuto, and walked slowly over to Signor Baffi, the fruit-seller, to ask him if he wanted sugar in his egg-nog.

BENVENUTO LUGINI

"You are Eleonora!" reverberated in Anna's ear all the rest of the rainy afternoon, but she refrained from pondering over this strange information till she should be secluded in her room. Anna now occupied a single room, because she was working in a contagious ward, and the peace of the evenings was balm. To-night she did not read her "Dante" with the English translation on one side, but merely sat on the edge of her little cot-bed and wondered what Benvenuto could mean. Now she remembered how, on the first day, when she had told him her name, he had exclaimed: "I thought surely it would be Eleonora!"

Though Anna was groping in a fog of mystery, which threatened to grow denser and denser, one luminous fact stood out clearly: Benvenuto adored her! When she came near him the leaden apathy imposed by his disease seemed to fall off like an old winter skin, and he emerged a poet. How glorious it was thus to inspire the soul—a thousand times more glorious than to serve egg-nogs on a faultless tray and to fill hot-water bottles!

With spirits thus elated, Anna fell asleep, and woke in the morning with a throbbing sense of expectation. When she came to her ward at seven o'clock, Miss Pyle was talking gravely at the door with the night nurse, a mild, sober-faced young woman, who seemed to have the hush of the night still about her.

"Lugini has had one of his hemorrhages in the night," the night nurse explained to Anna, who flushed with rage because she had missed this opportunity to nurse him.

"I shall keep a nurse near him constantly," said Miss Pyle.

"He asked for Miss Borden," the night nurse re-

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

marked mildly, whereupon Miss Pyle's forehead clouded ever so faintly.

But Anna was jubilant, for now she would be forced to stay with him longer than with the others. Perhaps it was well, after all, that she had not been there during his helpless plight; he wanted to be the poet, not the patient, in her eyes, and was she not the head nurse of his soul?

As she came near Benvenuto she dismissed the orderly who was helping him into his steamer-chair, and arranged the pillows and spread the rug for him herself. He was too pale, and his eyes were gleaming more ecstatically than ever before. Anna purposely remained silent about the hemorrhage, and she was planning how to distract him from the contemplation of his wearing disease, when Benvenuto began in the ardent voice of a restless child:

"I will tell you all about it now!"

Anna thought he meant the hemorrhage, and replied soothingly:

"Oh, no, let us talk about brighter things!"

Then the Italian's white face flushed, as he cried, wounded: "What could be brighter than that?"

"Oh, you mean you will tell me about Eleonora!" said Anna, suddenly enlightened. "Oh, do—do! I have been dreaming about her—— Oh, no! you said that I myself was Eleonora: I would not dream about myself! But it is all mystery—explain! Dear me," Miss Pyle was again hovering near, a square-faced messenger from "stern Duty, daughter of the gods," "I suppose I must bring you your breakfast first, and the others, too—but after that——"

When Anna sat beside his steamer-chair at last with

BENVENUTO LUGINI

the prospect of at least ten minutes' leisure, she fixed her eyes on the pale lips of the Italian boy, eager for his story. But instead of telling his tale, Benvenuto broke out in lyric ecstasy:

"Great is thy beauty, Eleonora:
Brighter than the luster of the stars;
Thy glance is flaming, Eleonora,
And thy beauty's golden halo bars
All lesser lights,
All shadow-sprites,
All but thee eclipsing—Eleonora!"

Anna was happy. To be the theme of a poet's song had been a dream of her childhood, and it had come true. But why Eleonora?

"Are you improvising?" she asked, with vain curiosity, and was somewhat disappointed when he shook his head with a mysterious smile.

"It was written for Eleonora," he said, with a tantalizing emphasis on the name. "But you are Eleonora now."

"Is Eleonora dead?" Anna asked carefully.

Benvenuto laughed, a loud, hearty laugh.

"No," he cried. "She is alive—alive and bright. I am touching her now." And in his boyish exuberance he clasped Anna's hand.

"I will not stand this mystery a minute longer!" threatened Anna, freeing her hand from his clasp.

"Oh, then I must explain!" he said, with a sigh of resignation. "But I hate to explain. I like to sing and to talk and to laugh—but I hate to explain! Well, *Eleonora* is the heroine of my play."

"Your play—what play?" Anna was still mystified.

"The play I have written called '*Eleonora*.' It is going

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

to be acted next month. Oh, how I wish you could play the part!"

As the mist cleared in Anna's mind, it dawned upon her what he had meant when he had cried before: "How I wish you could play it!"

"Then you are a playwright!" she exclaimed, clapping her hands. "Why didn't you tell me before? I am proud of you!"

"I wanted to," replied Benvenuto, "but somehow it happened—well, never mind—you know it now! And it is so wonderful, it is such a miracle how you are the real *Eleonora*. Your voice is *Eleonora's*, your eyes are *Eleonora's* eyes. When I saw you first, I thought that I must be asleep and you my dream, because I had dreamed of you so often before. But I have touched your hand; you are not a dream! Do you want to hear the plot of the play? You must get acquainted with yourself, *Eleonora*!"

And while Benvenuto laughed in child-like glee, a ruddy glow was flitting over his pale face. Anna looked wistfully about in the ward where nurses were tripping to and fro: there were empty beds to make, and compresses to prepare for the bedridden patients!

"I must go again," she said to Benvenuto, as she rose reluctantly. "You see I am Anna and not *Eleonora*!"

When Anna was bending over the empty beds to renew the sheets, Benvenuto's words resounded in her ears. And while she was throwing the old sheets into the clothes-basket and spreading the fresh white linen over the mattresses, her heart beat violently. She was a poet's vision, she was the creature of a poet's inspiration! This thought made her dizzy, and at the same time she felt strangely honored. She was longing to

BENVENUTO LUGINI

hear the plot of the play, to hear herself revealed as the heroine. If she only could linger by Benvenuto's chair all day, instead of squandering moments of golden opportunity over her dull duties. Had she not conjured a glow on Benvenuto's pallid face by the mere sound of her voice? Had he asked for the efficient senior nurses after his painful night, or for the excellent Miss Pyle—had he not asked for her, his Eleonora? And was she not his ideal vision in flesh and blood? No, surely she was not made to tuck pillows into their slips and to hover fondly over the soiled clothes-basket!

Mechanically she went about her tasks, keeping an eye on Benvenuto, to watch if he needed her; but she did not go to him again all the morning, lest her interest in him should become notorious in the ward.

"Fond of talking with Lugini, eh?" said Croce, loud enough for Benvenuto to hear, and winked at Anna, as she brought him his tonic. Anna merely shrugged her shoulders and smiled; she did not mind the rare jocular spasms of these plain men prostrated by their viperous disease, but rather enjoyed them like the burlesque scenes of a Shakespeare tragedy. Besides, the rougher sallies of these men made Benvenuto seem a prince among paupers.

Benvenuto had coughed several times during the morning, though not violently enough to need attention; but now, while Anna was waiting on his stout neighbor Croce, the boy's cough grew louder and more threatening, till she rushed to his side. The cough stopped immediately, and Benvenuto looked up with a half roguish, half wistful glance, and whispered:

"I only coughed so that you would come!"

"Naughty boy!" cried Anna, playfully slapping his

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

shoulder, in spite of Croce's spying and mocking eyes. And suddenly a great tenderness for this Italian boy welled up within her, a tenderness almost maternal which made her smile because it was quite new. She could not tell why it was that she felt infinitely wiser and older than this boy only four years her junior. He had tasted the bitterness of life more than she. Had he not lost both mother and father; was he not severed from his country and kin, friendless and poor, wasting in illness, a burden to public care? But with all these youth-robbing griefs he was a child—perhaps because he was always picking flowers where older men would have gathered only weeds. And the thought that she was adored by such a cherub soul dazzled Anna like an aureole beaming down from her own forehead.

"What did you want me for?" she asked idly.

"I wanted to ask you something," Benvenuto replied hurriedly, as though he feared that she would slip away.

"What is it?" Anna was all suspense.

"Have you ever acted?" he asked eagerly.

Anna was led from one suspense to another; why should he ask that question now?

"I have acted in theatricals at school and in clubs," she answered slowly, trying to recollect all the plays in which she had ever taken part. "I was *Rosalind* once in 'As You Like It.'"

"And did you—did you play well?" asked Benvenuto, with glistening eyes.

"Why, they used to say," said Anna, in the glee of a sudden remembrance, "they used to say that I was a born actress."

Benvenuto clapped his hands with an outcry of delight.

BENVENUTO LUGINI

"Then will you do it?" he cried. "Will you act *Eleonora* in my play?"

"Act *Eleonora*? This was more than Anna had dreamed! What did he mean? Was this but a sally of his lithe imagination?"

"It won't be given till late in November," Benvenuto went on ardently, while Anna remained speechless. "And they have not yet chosen the leading lady. If I say I want a certain lady to play the part they must let her play it. I am the author! Oh, say you will do it!"

This new and dazzling idea was too swiftly thrust upon her, too unsurmised for Anna to face it with a clear mind. She only stammered in her first confusion: "But I am a nurse!"

"Only a probationer!" replied the Italian, with irresistible fervor. "You said your term would be over in a few days. You should not be a nurse: you were not made to do low jobs, you were made to shine before thousands of people, to make them laugh and cry—Oh, Eleonora! You are *Eleonora* already—you must do it!"

"But would they really take me?" asked Anna, still bewildered. "And what is the name of the company?"

"It is the Estrello Melodrama Company. Mr. Estrello is the star—it is a stage name; his real name is Mr. Carter. He is a very good actor, but the ladies are not good. Oh, when I think of Miss Dillingham—and you!"

Anna was dazzled: she was already a greater actress than Miss Dillingham before she had set foot on the stage!

"But, my dear boy!" she cried out suddenly. "You haven't even told me the plot!"

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"I will tell you this minute," said Benvenuto, and in that moment a crash of broken glass made both start. Croce had dropped the glass from which he had drunk his tonic on the hard floor. Anna rushed up to the heap of splinters, alarmed lest Miss Pyle should scold her for not relieving her patient of his dishes in time, and thus prevent her from lingering long enough with Benvenuto to hear his play.

"You wouldn't come to get it," said Croce spitefully. "So I had to drop it!"

"Why didn't you call me?" asked Anna, with smothered rage.

"You were flirting with the kid over there," replied Croce, winking, whereupon Anna snapped back:

"Do you expect me to wait on you only?" and whisked out of the ward.

It was not until late in the afternoon, when all the work was done and the patients lay peacefully waiting for the evening, that Anna found an excuse to linger once more beside Benvenuto, by bringing him a hot-water bottle and an extra rug against the growing chill in the air.

"Tell me the plot now in ten minutes!" Anna commanded. "Before another of your jealous countrymen drops a glass to make me furious."

And when she had sat down beside him, Benvenuto told the plot of the play "*Eleonora*," interspersed with bits of dialogue and fragments of songs—at first with some shyness, then with more and more feverish excitement, till the ecstatic gleam in his eyes that she had seen before illumined his whole face.

The plot was the story of *Eleonora*, a beautiful young countess of an old but impoverished family. *Eleonora*

BENVENUTO LUGINI

falls in love with *Riccardo*, a brilliant young flute-player, contrary to the will of her family, who want to marry her to *Donato*, a rich manufacturer. *Eleonora* elopes with *Riccardo*, and follows him to New York, where they will seek their fortune. Unable to find employment, they sink into destitute poverty, and *Riccardo* is beginning to be afflicted with tuberculosis. Meanwhile *Eleonora* has kept in correspondence with her mother, although she has not confessed her poverty; and *Donato*, who has traced her whereabouts through her mother, follows her to New York, and finds her one day in a lowly tenement. Seeing the plight that she and her husband are in, he promises to take them to Europe and to support *Riccardo* at Davos till he shall be cured, if she will promise on her return to Italy to have her marriage, which has been performed by a doubtful priest in Naples, annulled and to marry him. *Eleonora* is torn between the desire to help her husband and the horror of deserting him. Finally, however, she accepts *Donato's* offer, after begging and obtaining his consent that she might spend the first months with her husband in Davos, before suffering her marriage to be annulled. She then signs a contract, in which she promises to marry *Donato* within a year. Her husband, who does not see *Donato*, she tells that her mother has sent a friend with money which she has just inherited from a distant relative. On *Donato's* money *Eleonora* and her husband go to Davos and spend there sunny, restful months; *Riccardo* meanwhile is strengthened, *Eleonora* unusually light-hearted and devoted to her husband, but overcome by spasms of great sadness. *Riccardo* improves so much that he is once more able to resume his flute-playing, and on playing in the park one night he attracts the attention of the

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

conductor of an American symphony orchestra, who procures for him a position in his own orchestra; and a wealthy American offers to take *Riccardo* over to America as music teacher to his son till the work of the orchestra shall begin. In a rhapsody of joy *Riccardo* tells his wife of their good fortune, but *Eleonora* breaks out into passionate tears. She exhorts him to be true to his work and to love music instead of her. Then she gives him her contract with *Donato* sealed, and makes him swear not to break the seal till he shall be in America. Thereupon she drinks the poisonous contents of a flask that she has always kept with her, and dies in her husband's arms.

Anna, who was infected by Benvenuto's own enthusiasm, found herself listening in keen suspense, and when the tale was told verily trembling with excitement. Her reason was declaring that all this was youthful melodrama, but her heart was beating in response to inward visions of herself as *Eleonora*.

"Will you play it now?" cried Benvenuto, so eagerly that an affirmative answer seemed necessary, if only to save him from a disappointment that might affect his health.

And all at once Anna felt not only his eyes upon her, but the eyes of a multitude that were hanging on her lips in mute suspense—a multitude of listeners who had laid their souls for two hours into her hands that she might make them jubilant with mirth or weighed down with sorrow or torn by passion, as she desired, through the magic of her speech. And to Anna it seemed in this moment that to be an actress was to be a reigning queen, powerful for good or for evil, and glorious if her power was turned to good.

BENVENUTO LUGINI

Anna cried: "Oh, Benvenuto, let me think it over till to-morrow!"

If she should leave the hospital the eyes of Miss Pyle would watch her no longer with furtive suspicion; no longer would her getting up and her sitting down, her very breathing be prescribed by rules! She would be free, and more than free: she would be powerful and hold the souls of hundreds in her sway. How transitory was the body, and how unworthy all these cumbersome efforts to ease its frailties, when the soul demanded inspiration!

For the rest of the day this was the refrain in Anna's mind, which drowned the cricket-voice of her conscience. Father, Aunt Sarah, the superintendent and her colleagues in the hospital—she could not think of their protests when Benvenuto's glistening eyes were following her at every step with frantic suspense.

"You must say yes," was his last word before she left him for the night. "You must say yes or—— Oh, I couldn't bear it if you said no!"

The appeal in his voice haunted Anna in her sleepless night. If she did not play *Eleonora* there was none in the world to play Benvenuto's heroine. She alone was called upon, nay, predestined to play the part. She could not, must not, crush the poet by saying no.

So the next morning when Benvenuto cried out passionately: "Will you do it?" she answered solemnly:

"Yes."

"I will write this minute," declared Benvenuto. "Please bring me a pencil and paper!"

"You had better dictate to me," said Anna, still the nurse guarding her patient. "Remember your eyes!"

Benvenuto, in fact, had been forbidden to use his eyes

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

during the last week, because he had overstrained them from too much reading. Therefore, Anna, with Miss Pyle's reluctant permission, wrote the letter to Mr. Estrello, alias Mr. Carter, that Benvenuto dictated in a voice vibrating with joyful excitement. In the letter Anna's dazzling fitness for the part, the miraculous circumstance that she represented the exact embodiment of the author's vision was extolled without mentioning that she had never been on the stage. When Anna had thus written out her own praises, she gave Benvenuto the pen with which he signed his name, and thus, quietly, in the tuberculosis ward, the first step was taken toward a possible dazzling career.

It was not till long after the letter had slid irrevocably into the depth of the letter-box, and Anna had shut herself up in her room after the day's work, that she opened the gates of her mind to the flood of reproaches and prudent warnings that had been rumbling outside all day, and were now rushing in with a roar. Anna Borden on the stage! When she pictured her father's face on receiving the news, it was a face grim and distorted like a death mask; as for Aunt Sarah's horror—it would break her down! And then the town talk, the sensation, the scandal! But how silly it was to imagine them at home hearing of her new career after it was fixed! Of course, she would have to write them about her plans this minute and wheedle her father into consent by the strength of her most desperate eloquence, just as she had won his consent to become a nurse. Not quite two months ago she had entered here a martyr, throbbing with Samaritan devotion—and now! Anna shuddered at the reproaches that would be hurled at her. The consternation at the hospital when she would leave volun-

BENVENUTO LUGINI

tarily at the expiration of the probationer's term, far from annoying her, would give her a certain relish. But her father——! After all, would it be wise to write now, before she had heard from the Estrello Melodrama Company, for, if they refused to take her, would she not then have shot a thunderbolt into her father's peaceful house in vain? Not that she would stay on at the hospital, anyway, even if they should refuse her, now that her soul had been roused to the higher mission of the ennobling artist—but, nevertheless, it was better to wait. So Anna went to bed without writing home, and could hardly sleep all the night.

Anna's interest in the hospital was snuffed out like a flickering candle, and her concern for the men's tuberculosis ward dwindled into her grateful tenderness for Benvenuto. Nevertheless, she worked especially hard during her last days, for fear that she might be dismissed at the end of her probationer's term, and her departure would hence not be proudly voluntary.

At last the reply had come from Mr. Estrello. As she entered the ward one morning, Benvenuto waved to her with an opened letter, and she could tell by the triumphant glow on his face that the news was good.

"They want you!" he cried, as she approached him. "The letter came last night, just after you had gone. I've been awake all night thinking of you, Eleonora!"

Anna trembled so that she nearly dropped the tray with the medicine-glass in her hand. It was torture not to be able to read the bountiful letter instantly, but to have to rush instead to the bedside of a new patient. She snatched the letter, however, and put it into the bodice of her apron, while she cast a quick expressive

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

glance of joy and gratitude on Benvenuto before flitting away.

The letter, which Anna read at last while she was waiting by the dumb-waiter in the hall for egg-nogs to rise from the kitchen, contained indeed welcome news. Mr. Estrello consented, since Miss Dillingham did not like the part of *Eleonora* and the other ladies of the company did not seem to suit the rôle, to give Miss Borden a trial of a few rehearsals, and if she proved satisfactory, to let her take the part; moreover, they hoped that Miss Borden would be able to come to Providence within a week. Anna was delirious: within a week the stiff apron and cap would be cast off forever, displaced by the picturesque Italian dress of *Eleonora*! How swiftly her life was whirling on: to-day in the sick-room, to-morrow on the stage—and not yet a year ago dining at the American Ambassador's in Berlin!

But this was not the time for complacent reminiscence! The sooner she arrived at Providence to read the play and become familiar with her part, the better; for the careless Benvenuto had no copy with him in the hospital. As her probationer's term would be over the day after to-morrow, she could then go directly to Providence instead of going home first as she had planned before.

Suddenly the idea of not going home alarmed her: was she still Anna Borden? She was going to step from the rigorous hospital on to the stage—the stage, which to Aunt Sarah and all her train seemed the haunt of a pitiful, tinselly, fallible species of humanity—and this without the consent of her father! Was she mad? She had armed herself against protests and reproaches at home, but she had not dreamed of evading them altogether; and her own callousness gave her alarm.

BENVENUTO LUGINI

Brutally the hum-drum routine of the hospital went on regardless of Anna's inward struggles, and the din of her soul-battle had to be silenced by sugared words of cheer to Baffi and Croce. But as soon as her two hours of recreation in the afternoon had begun, she rushed to the superintendent's office to announce her will to depart. The sooner that was accomplished the better; and, besides, she was already making her announcement much too late to be polite—two days before the expiration of her trial term!

Miss Thayer, the superintendent, was astounded.

"Why, Miss Borden!" she exclaimed. "Now I thought you were heart and soul in your work! To be sure, Miss Pyle reported a slackening of interest the last week, but I supposed you were getting tired from continuous work that you were not accustomed to, and I was ready to make allowances. And Miss Leighton used to commend you highly. What is your reason—or is it just that you are tired of the work?"

"I have decided," said Anna carefully, "that nursing is not the occupation that I am best suited for."

Miss Thayer, mystified, began to praise the beauty and nobility of the nurse's profession as above all others, but the stubborn probationer stayed unmoved.

"You see," Anna explained evasively, "I am not very deeply interested in diseases—and in the body, anyway. I am fond of literature and that sort of thing, and I have decided to go into that line."

After expressions of regret and a gentle hint that Anna might have told her decision sooner for the convenience of the hospital, the superintendent dismissed Anna, who went back to her room with a sigh of relief.

Now the next step was to write home! She had to tell

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

her father the end of her nurse's career, and more particularly her change of address: and that would involve the shocking confession that she was going on the stage. Anna would have loved to defer that confession till she was quite sure of her star part—an achievement which would prove the best weapon in her defense! The idea of going home before her critical trial in Providence now seemed impossible, absurd: the pricking, stinging reproaches at home would check the free play of her spirit at a time when she would need all her powers, all the latent thrills and rhapsodies of her soul to play *Eleonora*! Even the bitter letters from her father would weaken her—and—— Oh, horror! would he not most probably, on receiving her letter, take the next train to Providence and step with a stern father's threat between her and *Eleonora*? It was hard to know what to do, thus all alone with her secret in the little bare room, while Benvenuto, the only soul who shared it, was dreaming idly in his steamer-chair of his discovered heroine, his glorious *Eleonora*! Mechanically Anna took a sheet of letter paper and began to write:

"Dear Father——"

But what now? She must go to Providence and try the part: that was clear, because it was a promise. If she should write the project to her father now, he would come and spoil it, either by preventing her forcibly from approaching the stage, or by making her unfit, through anger and sorrow, to play the part. Hence there was nothing left to do but to keep the whole plan a secret. And so she wrote in a violent mood:

Please do not send me any letters to the hospital during the next week. I am going away—not very far from you—and I will write you in about a week where I am and why

BENVENUTO LUGINI

I am there. Please don't worry, and tell Aunt Sarah not to worry. I assure you, I am not eloping either with a doctor or a patient or any one else. I have not broken down either. I am in perfect health, and I am not doing anything disgraceful. So if you love me, be willing to bear this mystery a week and trust in

Your loving daughter,

ANNA.

Anna folded and addressed the letter with a trembling hand, put the stamp on crookedly, and mailed the mysterious piece of news all in a frantic haste. Then she ordered a room in a Providence hotel where she had stayed with her father once about six years ago when she had accompanied him on a business journey; and after she had mailed this letter, too, she threw herself on the little cot bed, exhausted from the strain. And, as she lay, a stage stretched out before her, and she herself, *Eleonora*, was gliding over it, her black hair loosely fastened, a geranium at her ear, to meet her lover in a dulcet scene; and she heard Benvenuto's melodious lines—lyric even in prose—in her own voice, veiled, yet sonorous; and somewhere she saw indistinctly and heard faintly, but felt most keenly the body of strangers for whom she was moving and speaking and pouring out her soul.

To lighten the burden of her secret she told Benvenuto in the evening what she had written her father, but when he asked her in consternation why she had not boasted of her dazzling prospects, Anna was cast down. How could he understand why the haughtiest man in the country would not be proud to have his daughter act *Eleonora*!

"None of my family has ever been on the stage," she

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

replied, in a subdued tone, "and my father would be angry if he knew that I was breaking off my work here so soon—it's only two months ago that I entered, you must remember—and that I was setting out to do something so different that I had never done before."

Although she knew the history of Benvenuto's life, she had kept her own past veiled before him, and he had always seemed content to know her without background, simply for herself with her love of poetry and music, and for her mystic likeness to the heroine of his fancy.

"Will your father be very angry?" he asked uneasily.

"I dare say he will!" she said gayly. "But what do I care! I am not going to act for him, nor even for you, my friend: I am going to act for the beloved unknown in the audience who will go home thrilled, exhilarated by our play."

"Yes, our play!" cried Benvenuto, while his eyes sparkled. "Our play—yours and mine!"

And with Italian exuberance he kissed her hand. It did not trouble Anna that Croce was staring at her and that Miss Pyle was giving directions to a junior nurse near by: she had only one more day at the hospital, and none of its inmates had any kinship with her new career—except Benvenuto!

When her day's duties were over at seven, Anna told Miss Pyle the shocking news of her impending departure, which the head nurse, who had never lavished affection on Anna, bore with equilibrium.

"Are you too tired to go on with the work?" Miss Pyle asked discreetly.

"Yes, I am rather tired of the work," said Anna, and suddenly she was seized with an impulse to assault Miss Pyle's placidity by announcing that she was going on the

BENVENUTO LUGINI

stage. But she refrained for her father's sake, lest, on the wings of gossip, the news should reach him in a glaring dress.

The same mystery Anna preserved during dinner when she had announced to her colleagues that she was going to leave voluntarily at the end of her probation term, the day after to-morrow. There was an uproar of astonished and inquisitive voices:

"But why?"—"But you were doing so well!"—"You don't look worn out!"—"Are you going back home?"—"Are you engaged to a doctor?"

And Anna shook her head and smiled like a tantalizing Mona Lisa.

"I am sorry, but it is all a secret," she said, relishing the flutter that she had stirred up in this tranquil company.

"Well, I declare," cried Dora Arnold, with her round blue eyes wide open, "I always thought you were different!"

"Different!" Dora emphasized this word as though she meant by "different" everything surprising, misleading, exciting that most good people at the hospital were not. And Anna was content to be different.

After dinner Anna asked some of her companions to her room, and exerted herself, as she used to do with guests in her former life, to make them laugh and banter. In fact, with her parting exultation was mingled a fleeting pity for these poor nurses who were going to tread on along their marked-out routine paths, while she would be spreading her wings and, hovering, an iridescent dragon-fly, before the eyes of a dazzled throng. And she wondered, as she entertained her eager guests about her, whether any of these apparently so harmless,

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

gentle creatures bore, like her, a passionate longing for great achievement in their hearts beneath the stiff white bodices of their starched aprons, or whether, after all, she was "different." Before they dispersed, Anna gave each a token—a pin, a scarf, a volume of poetry, a picture—in a capricious desire to be well remembered in the virtuous place that she was deserting thus abruptly, without any outspoken cause.

"Oh, isn't it just lovely of you!" gushed Dora Arnold, at parting. "I wish you weren't going away. How we shall miss you! I missed you so since you went to the other ward; my room-mate now is so awfully sort of quiet!"

The last day at the hospital Anna welcomed as a wanderer, longing for daylight, welcomes the last glow of sunrise and the fading of the morning star. Even Miss Pyle's square face she saw in a roseate light, and Baffi and Croce inspired her most solicitous care. She could not refrain from telling each one of her dark-skinned patients, excepting only those who had come in the last few days, that she was going away to-morrow, and when their fiery or melancholy eyes saddened as they protested against her flight from her post, Anna felt with a glow of satisfaction that she had already accomplished her own special task; she held these rough Italians by a charm—what else was there left to do, that Miss Pyle and the others could not do better?

And at last came her farewell from Benvenuto. All day he had followed every step of hers with his ecstatic eyes, and when she came to his side she felt herself vibrate from the electric soul-current that went out from his feverish spirit to hers. The physician, on his morning round, had pronounced his satisfaction in Benve-

BENVENUTO LUGINI

nuto's general condition, although he had found him unnaturally excited, but Anna feared a relapse after her departure.

"I don't want any other nurse!" he clamored, like a peevish child, then added, with a martyr's flush of pride: "But I would not keep you from being *Eleonora*!"

"I shall write you as soon as they accept me," promised Anna, purposely ignoring the possibility of being rejected. "You shall be the first to know—you shall know before my father!"

"And after the first performance!" said Benvenuto. "I am greedy for your letters."

"Yes, after the first performance, too!" Anna complied. "And I shall keep letting you know how the play is going."

"Oh, I am so happy!" Benvenuto cried out. "I think I must have back my health. I don't feel sick any more. Oh, perhaps they will let me go and see you play *Eleonora*!"

Anna shook her head in pity. Once more he seemed like a youthful, impetuous son, and she had to resist an impulse to kiss him on his feverish forehead.

"You shall think of me that first night I appear—you shall think of me so hard that it will be just as if you were there. You will know every moment just what I shall be saying——"

"And I shall see you, I shall see you!" he cried. "I shall see you as clearly as if I were in the front row, and I shall clap for you, *Eleonora*!"

"And when you will be famous," said Anna, "and all the papers will tell about the stirring new play——"

"Then I shall owe it all to you," Benvenuto broke in. "Oh, do you know what you are doing for me?"

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"Yes, I know," said Anna, with the dignity that endured no coy denial of virtue, "but remember I am not doing it only for you——"

"Oh, no, I must remember!" cried Benvenuto wistfully. "You are doing it for the beloved unknown! But you can't help doing it for me, too—it is my play! And so I must thank you——"

Anna drew her hand away from his fervent lips. Why prolong this parting? For her heart began to grow heavy at the thought of this boy-poet left behind in the cool, colorless ward while she soared forth, the messenger of his verdant spirit; and this was not the time for heavy-heartedness or looks cast behind.

"I must go!" she said hastily. "*Addio*, Benvenuto!"

But the passionate boy held her back by the wrist.

"Take this!" he whispered, giving her a small folded piece of paper. "And open it in the train!"

The train! Anna wished that she were already on her way to Providence, and it wearied her to think that an evening, a night and breakfast were still wedged between Benvenuto and Mr. Estrello. What might not happen in those hours? Perhaps a telegram from her father to the hospital demanding information!

After packing her trunk, Anna went to bed very early, for the last time in the little cot bed; and when she came to breakfast the next morning in her traveling suit on the day when, no longer a probationer, she should have put on the prescribed uniform of the school, she felt like a mutineer in the eyes of her mates. In the subdued, work-a-day air of the early morning the farewells of the nurses seemed like jarring, lawless outbursts, especially Dora Arnold's overflowing: "Good-bye, my dear!"

BENVENUTO LUGINI

"Where is Agnes Leighton?" asked Anna, remembering that she had not seen her former head nurse for several days.

"We've been having a terrible lot of work in our ward!" said Jenny Reid, the poor, frightened little probationer who was to-day a nurse. "She's hardly had time to eat. Oh, there she is!"

Agnes Leighton came, pale and serene, as on the day of Anna's arrival, and when Anna told her that she was leaving the hospital to-day, a sadness troubled the clear eyes of the nurse and clouded her calm brow. Anna stood mute for a moment, in admiration for this dispassionate saint, who had grown into the institution that she was serving, body, mind, and soul, making its wants her own; for Anna knew that Agnes Leighton was not grieving because she would miss her former probationer—she had not grieved when Anna left her ward!—but because the hospital was losing one sheep from its flock.

"I shall remember you always!" Anna said reverently, as she shook hands with the head nurse. "Saint Agnes!"

Half an hour later, after a brief farewell interview with the superintendent and a lonely ride to the station, Anna was looking out of the train window at the bustle on the station. Who were these people, scurrying back and forth, shouting and making frantic motions? Strangers! To whom was she steaming now, away from companions and security, without the knowledge of her father? To strangers!

As Anna opened her bag to take out her ticket, she saw the little slip of paper that Benvenuto had told her to open in the train. She unfolded it, and as the train rolled out of the Grand Central Station, she read:

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

TO ANNA

A dream I had on starry nights
Spun of sorrow and delights:

'Twas a vision iridescent
Of a sylph with eyes of flame,
Of a seraph with a crescent—
All in one, and bore the name,
Eleonora!

When I lay diseased and grieved,
Even of my dream bereaved,
Rising like a sun resplendent
Thou hast lit my spirit's night,
Thou my healing soul-attendant,
Thou my dream made life and light—
Anna, beloved!

CHAPTER VII

MISS LILY SPANGLE

WHEN Anna told the cabman in front of her hotel in Providence to drive to the house where she knew, from a letter, that Mr. Estrello was living, the cabman looked surprised, and when, fifteen minutes later, Anna stepped out at Hotel Welcome she understood his emotions. The porter greeted her with deference and led her into a meager reception room adorned with posters and glaring colored pictures of comic opera stars. There Anna sat on a threadbare sofa, waiting with violent heart-beats for her professional fate in the form of Mr. Estrello.

"Is this Miss Borden? Well, how do you do!"

Mr. Estrello swaggered into the room, a tall, brown-eyed, dark-haired individual of the sort that Anna had seen a thousand times behind counters, in offices, at railway stations—the average, unclassified man! Nevertheless, Mr. Estrello seemed buoyed up by a sense of superiority as he sat beside Anna on the sofa and talked with her in a low, ingratiating voice.

"So Mr. Lugini seems struck on having you take the part!" he exclaimed genially, with a sweeping glance at Anna, as if he were measuring the sanity of Lugini's judgment.

Anna knew at once that her immediate task was to make a good impression. This was not, as in the hospital, preëminently a question of efficiency, but of cap-

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

turing Mr. Estrello's imagination. And while he was asking her where she had acted before, Anna argued to herself with thoughts lightning-swift that it would not do to pretend a professional past, that it would be better to invest the truth with all possible glitter.

"I have not acted at all," she said, with a haughty toss of her head. "In fact, if Mr. Lugini had not been so very anxious to have me take the part I never should have dreamed of going on the stage. If my family should discover me here now they would be exceedingly angry. It sounds very rude, Mr. Estrello, but I suppose you understand that in some spheres of society going on the stage is not considered highly respectable."

At the bottom of her heart Anna felt that she had never talked in such a silly strain before; at the same time she knew that her speech was having the desired effect on Mr. Estrello, and it seemed as though she were already acting.

"So you're a lady of society, are you?" asked Mr. Estrello, with a special relishing emphasis on the word "society," and Anna, picking up her cue with delight, responded:

"Yes, I suppose that's what I am—that is, I was: I am going to give up society for the stage—if you will take me!"

"Now I'd just like to know," said Mr. Estrello thoughtfully, "how a lady like you came to know Lugini?"

Ah! The shrewd manager spoke, and Anna was bewildered for a moment. If she should betray her career as nurse to Mr. Estrello she would drop from the lofty sphere of lady to the low estate of a servile wage-earner!

"Well, you know," she replied, after brief reflection, "we sometimes try to help the poor and sick in the hos-

MISS LILY SPANGLE

pitals. And you know Mr. Lugini is confined in a hospital for tuberculosis. In that way I came to know him; and he told me about his play and about his heroine whom he thought I resembled miraculously; and he begged me to take the part."

The manager seemed satisfied with this explanation.

"Is your home in New York?" he asked, in a tone suddenly matter-of-fact.

"No, my home is in Boston," she answered, with a guilty sensation. "But I have just been spending two months in New York."

"And you've never done any acting at all?" he continued. "Not in an amateur way, either?"

"Oh, yes, I have played in private theatricals often," said Anna eagerly. "I was *Rosalind* once in Shakespeare's 'As You Like It.'"

"Well, I guess you'll find professional work different, all right," said Mr. Estrello. "I'll give you your part, so's you can be looking it over for to-morrow."

Then he left the room and came back with a bundle of typewritten sheets.

"It ain't very long," he consoled her. "I'll give you a scene in the second act for your trial to-morrow. I won't expect you to know it, but just to be acquainted with it, so's I can tell how you suit the part."

Anna was instructed to appear at the theater for her trial the next morning, and she took leave of Mr. Estrello in hopeful spirits.

As she was stepping out of the Hotel Welcome to the cab that was waiting outside, a man passed by whose sharp, inquisitive-looking face seemed familiar, and who stared at her intently. She slammed the cab door, however, and fled his scrutinizing glance.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

While Anna was reveling in the luxury of a spacious room with a lounge and mirrors, after her austere hospital cell, her mind was with Mr. Estrello on the threadbare sofa of Hotel Welcome. Soon he would play the part of her passionate lover and her tender husband—that commonplace man who said “ain’t” when he forgot that he was talking to a lady! What would her father say! Would Aunt Sarah ever grasp such a situation?

Dining in lonely state at a strange hotel was a novel experience to Anna, who had always been escorted, but the knowledge that she was quite unknown and unwatched in the town gave her a delirious sense of freedom. Unwatched? Alone at a table not far from hers sat the man with the inquisitive face who had stared at her in front of Hotel Welcome, and his steel-gray eyes were fixed on her now, whenever she chanced to look his way. Evidently she had met him some time long ago, and he was expecting her to bow; but she had no inclination to greet him, for he seemed to her a hostile creature planted there to spy upon her and disturb her light-heartedness.

In the seclusion of her room Anna began immediately to study her part, although she was weighed down by fatigue. The scene that was to mark the cross-roads of her life represented *Eleonora* refusing *Donato*, determined to stay faithful to her husband and yielding finally to her selfish benefactor's persuasions. Anna stayed up till midnight learning by heart and practicing gestures and facial expressions before the mirror until she was worn out. Too tired to sleep for at least two hours, she thought so intensely of her heroine that she seemed to be growing into *Eleonora*; and to the lines of her part she fell asleep at last.

MISS LILY SPANGLE

In the sober grayness of the morning Anna's inspiration seemed to have fled, and she read over her part in the trial scene which she had learned by heart, determined to recapture the spark that had enkindled her spirits the night before.

"If he should not take me!" she said aloud, and shuddered as she recalled Benvenuto's glowing eyes, never clouded by a doubt in her powers.

"He shall take me!" she thought, while she was rummaging among her ribbons in search of the brightest bit of color that would capture Mr. Estrello's sharp eye. "When I want something desperately I usually get it."

As she walked toward the theater, which she had passed yesterday in the cab, she repeated her part on the way; and the nearer she came to her destination, the more firmly the inspiration of last night seized her again. She found herself skipping along the street with the airy step that was to be *Eleonora's* on the stage, and when she realized that some one was watching her from across the street she could not help laughing. The observer was no other than the man with the inquisitive face who had haunted her footsteps yesterday in front of Estrello's hotel and later in the dining-room. Could he be a spy? Anna dismissed this idea; how should her father happen to think of Providence, and, besides—the idea was too horrible to be considered! Fortunately, there was no time to reflect, for she had reached the theater, a building obscure enough to pass by without noticing it, except for the large sign. Following Mr. Estrello's instruction, she did not go in at the main door, but walked down a little dark side-alley to the stage entrance. Just as she was opening this door for the initiated, she caught

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

sight of her mysterious pursuer as he was peeping into the alley.

"Impudent thing!" she hissed to herself. But immediately her attention was absorbed by a formidable florid door-keeper, who shouted at her in the voice of a trombone:

"Miss Borden?"

"Yes," said Anna meekly. "Mr. Estrello is expecting me."

"He's just come," the porter condescended to say, and led her up a dark narrow flight of stairs to the stage.

Anna had never stood on a real stage before, and she had to say to herself: "I am on the stage!" before she could be duly impressed with the back sides of the wings that were representing evidently a spring garden. Toward the front, on one side of the stage, leaning against a pasteboard tree of two dimensions, stood Mr. Estrello.

"Just in time," he said cheerfully. "Now we can get right to work."

Anna's heart sank for a moment at the prospect of acting in front of closed curtains with Mr. Estrello as sole spectator. But, after all, the situation was unique in her life, and on her words and movements hung her future!

"Benvenuto!" she whispered to herself. "Be my guardian angel!"

She laid her typewritten part on a bench, hoping that her quickness in learning the lines would be a point in her favor. Mr. Estrello began to read the part of *Donato*; all at once Anna summoned all her energies together and, casting off Anna Borden, emerged the Italian passionate *Eleonora*.

MISS LILY SPANGLE

"Leave my husband!" she cried, darting forward like a wounded tigress. "Brute—are you mad? My husband—so good, so gentle——"

Anna's voice changed from the outraged clang to the veiled, subdued note of pathos. After all—she was not entirely *Eleonora*, for the Anna Borden beneath the mask knew that she was making an impression on Mr. Estrello.

When the scene was finished, the manager paused for effect, then announced in a solemn tone, as though he were bestowing a favor:

"That'll do. I'll let you have the part."

She had attained it; she was a professional actress! For an instant she was dizzy and the spring garden spun round, while her heart beat a wild measure.

Mr. Estrello had the contract in his pocket which he gave Anna to read; then, when she had read it, she signed her name and he signed his name to the copy that she received. And it was done.

"But I don't want my real name on the program," cried Anna eagerly, seized with an afterthought. "I shall have to have a stage name."

"What do you want your name to be?" asked Mr. Estrello, with a seriousness which to Anna did not seem genuine, as though he were asking a child how she would name her doll.

"Miss Lily Spangle," Anna replied by inspiration.

"All right," said the manager. "On the program you'll be Miss Spangle."

"And—and I should like to have you call me by that name when others are by, and to introduce me to your company as Miss Spangle—will you, please?"

"Just as you wish, Miss Spangle," said Mr. Estrello,

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

with an obliging smile, evidently amused at her eagerness to conceal her identity.

When Anna was told to return to the theater in the afternoon for the first rehearsal, as there was no time to lose, it seemed as though she were barely granted a breathing space in the swift progress of her career. When she said good-bye to Mr. Estrello, a smirk about his lips did not escape her, due probably to his satisfaction in the new leading lady.

Back in her room in the hotel, Anna studied carefully her contract, the most precious document that she owned. The contract was written in archaic language, the simple arguments couched in formal phraseology. At the theater she had merely glanced at the salary, and now the realization that she was a professional earning thirty dollars a week—in the hospital she had been, after all, only a probationary pupil—came over her as an adventurous novelty. Another clause she had not heeded in the presence of Mr. Estrello, one that startled her slightly out of her sense of complete security. It ran thus:

This contract can be canceled or annulled by either party upon giving two weeks' notice—

If Mr. Estrello should cancel her contract! But did he not accept her to-day without hesitation—why worry about these chimeras, when the present was glorious?

In fact, Anna was trying desperately to prolong her exultation, for from the depth of her soul the terrible imperative voice was thundering: "Now you must write home!"

Write home—impossible! Anna did not know how to begin the story of her change from the hospital to the

MISS LILY SPANGLE

stage, unless she began with Benvenuto, and if she began with Benvenuto they would think her moonstruck! It was clearly impossible—and yet it had to be done! But the week of silence for which she had prepared her father had only begun: after all, why write sooner than she had promised? The more rehearsals she could have undisturbed by family havoc, the better for her part and the play; and surely these first rehearsals required her undiminished strength!

So Anna found ample apology for silence, and by force crowded the militant thought of her father into the farthest corner of her mind.

One letter, nevertheless, had to be written directly, a letter which seemed to Anna inadequate in prose; and yet there was no time to ponder over blank-verse when a part had to be studied before three o'clock. Why write at all? With trembling hands she jotted down the telegram:

BENVENUTO LUGINI,
MONTROSE HOSPITAL, NEW YORK.
Accepted.

ELEONORA.

When this telegram was safely off, Anna's attention was concentrated on the coming rehearsal, and it was a relief at three o'clock to be standing once more in the presence of the august door-keeper. But when she reached the stage this time, instead of a tense hush, as in the morning, a jungle of voices greeted her ear. Her fellow-actors were assembled on the stage! As Anna entered, the voices died down and there was a flutter of suspense. This was natural, she felt instantly, because she was the new leading lady. Mr. Estrello introduced

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

her solemnly, with an air of pride, as though he were introducing a guest of honor, as Miss Lily Spangle, and presented to her the members of her cast: Miss Gwendolen Floyd, Miss Idella Flanagan, Miss Lucy Crane, Mr. George Leatherbee, and Mr. Leonard Valentine, who was to play the part of *Donato*. Anna bowed graciously, well aware from the timid way in which they responded, that they were looking up to her as to the symbol of another world; yet she realized at the same time that these strangers whom, three months ago, she would have labeled unceremoniously "queer people" were veterans, where she was a novice, and, above all, were to be her daily companions for the year.

"We'll go right to work!" Mr. Estrello dispelled the embarrassed silence that had followed the introduction. "Miss Floyd, Mr. Valentine!"

The first act opened with a scene between *Eleonora's* father and mother, who are talking about the advisability of giving their daughter's hand to *Donato*. Miss Gwendolen Floyd, in a high, flower-garden hat with a long pink chiffon veil that trailed down her back, read the part of the venerable, genteel noblewoman, while Mr. Leatherbee, who corresponded to Anna's ideal of a butcher, roared the part of the nobleman. Both were corrected several times for voice and gesture and ordered from one part of the stage to another.

"Can't you see what I mean, Miss Floyd?" Mr. Estrello shouted at the pink veil, when one sentence was repeated several times with the wrong intonation. "I ain't going to correct you again!"

Miss Floyd's calm did not seem ruffled in the least, and Anna wondered if Mr. Estrello would address her in the same tone.

MISS LILY SPANGLE

"Now, Miss Borden—Miss Spangle, I mean!" Mr. Estrello commanded, and Anna stepped forward with the timid, yet impetuous air of *Eleonora* to announce her love for *Riccardo*. Passionately she appealed to the strongly powdered, buxom Miss Floyd and the red-faced Mr. Leatherbee—her aristocratic parents—not to force her affections, and when the long speech was ended, Mr. Estrello commented in a subdued voice:

"You must let your voice out more: it won't reach the man in the last row on the gallery. And you mustn't turn your back to the audience ever! Otherwise, very good!"

A flutter seemed to pass over the actors after this comment, and Anna felt buoyed up and ready to act for the rest of her days. If Benvenuto only were looking on! As soon as she opened her lips to read her lines, she believed with all the concentrated strength of her imagination that he was standing beside Mr. Estrello, watching his *Eleonora*, and his visionary presence enhanced the unpoetic faces of Miss Floyd and Mr. Leatherbee. So she found herself longing to act every minute, and impatient when the others spoke their lines.

When the turn came for the love scene between *Eleonora* and her lover *Riccardo*, Mr. Estrello left off playing the manager and in a flash was transformed into the ardent lover. Anna, who had constantly had misgivings about her prosaic, ordinary manager's power to act, was thoroughly startled by the passionate vehemence of his tone and gesture. Unlike Miss Floyd and Mr. Leatherbee, he seemed to understand the part, and his brisk acting carried Anna along, so that she felt as if she were playing a close and exciting match-game.

"*Riccardo!*" she was crying, "if you doubt my love,

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

you must doubt that the sun will rise to-morrow!" when the burly form of the porter appeared in the wings and announced:

"There's a gentleman downstairs to see Mr. Estrello—one o' them newspaper folks."

Mr. Estrello did not respond to Anna's ardent declaration, for the Italian lover was instantly conjured back into the shrewd aspiring manager whose relation to the press was all-important.

During the short recess that followed Mr. Estrello's abrupt exit, the players began to talk and laugh, but nobody spoke to Anna, though she knew by their furtively subdued tone and occasional sly glances in her direction that they were constantly aware of her presence. Finally, a small, pale, and very young girl with large wistful gray eyes, who had been introduced as Miss Lucy Crane, approached her timidly and said in a plaintive child's voice:

"The boss said you was a real lady!"

At first Anna was at a loss for a reply; then answered rather unconvincingly:

"But aren't you a lady, too?"

"No, I ain't," said the little girl, shaking her head sadly. "But I'd like to be—gee, wouldn't I love to be a lady!"

In that moment Mr. Estrello came back beaming as though he had made a good bargain, and spoke the amorous reply which had been so rudely cut off in his love scene with Anna. Again his easily assumed fire and pathos impressed Anna, till he came to the songs that Benvenuto had addressed to her before. Then it was that the actor-manager sank far, far beneath the level of her Italian bard!

MISS LILY SPANGLE

When the rehearsal was over and Anna was walking home in solitary state, while the others, in chattering groups of twos and threes, were starting in another direction, the wistful eyes of that little Lucy Crane haunted her and she heard with her inward ear the ardent cry: "Gee, wouldn't I love to be a lady!" Was it so great a privilege to be a lady? Anna wondered about her colleagues, and, as she was wondering, a new vista opened out before her. In the hospital it had been her task to help the uneducated and obscure; here they were to help her—as her companions on the stage! When Anna came back into the fashionable hotel where nobody troubled to gaze at her because she was "different" or came from a realm of greater light and grace, she felt keenly the thrill of belonging to a small theatrical company. And it made her tremble with joyous expectation to think that in a few weeks, not the actors, but the whole great audience would gaze at her in wonder.

Nevertheless, in spite of her elated spirits, a sense of loneliness crept over her on her second companionless night in the hotel, together with fatigue from the day's exertions. Fortunately, there was no evening rehearsal, because the stage was used by another company; but there was always the part to learn and no excuse for idle musing. Till she fell asleep, Anna repeated her part, and she woke in the morning out of her dreams—the dreams of a real actress!—with the cry: "Riccardo, do not leave me!"

It was a bright, cold morning, and Anna felt especially brisk and steeled for the adventures of the day, as she walked cheerfully down to breakfast. In the lobby she snatched up a newspaper and—what was that?

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

MISS BORDEN ON THE STAGE!

flashed at her in huge black letters. Petrified, she read on:

The news that Miss Anna Borden, daughter of G. C. Borden of this city, is going to appear on the stage under the stage-name of Miss Lily Spangle, will cause no small astonishment in society. Miss Borden, who has starred in numerous private theatricals, has long cherished an ardent desire to go on the real stage, and has at last prevailed upon her father to give his consent . . .

Anna felt sick. She could not think; it was too horrible—it was a Boston paper, too, and her father would be reading it this very minute! The paper had fallen from her hands; she picked it up again with a determination to read every detestable word, when the stranger with the inquisitive face passed by, and as soon as he saw Anna with the newspaper in her hand, turned quickly away with a guilty look. All at once, as though by a flashlight revelation, Anna knew who this stranger was.

"Are you Mr. Quackenbush?" she cried, pouring all her rage into this passionate query.

The inquisitive-faced man turned round reluctantly, this time not in the least troubled with curiosity.

"Did you write this story?" Anna fairly glowered at her victim.

"What makes you think that?" he replied sheepishly, blushing as never a girl had blushed.

"That'll do," said Anna, in the metallic accent of contempt. "I remember your writing up the strike in the Borden mills."

And, seizing the paper, she walked briskly off into

MISS LILY SPANGLE

the breakfast room. Anna remembered now with dazzling clearness how, about four years ago, when a small strike had broken out in her father's mills, and Bruce, the labor-leader, had been misguiding public opinion, Mr. Quackenbush had exercised his imagination and magnified the grievances of the workmen in a way insulting to her father, who in return had made life bitter for Mr. Quackenbush. And this was the reporter's revenge! She recalled now, step by step, how he had espied her in front of Hotel Welcome, had stared at her at dinner that same day, had pursued her to the theater the next morning and had—oh, of course!—called Mr. Estrello away in the midst of her scene!

After locking herself up in her room, she read the fatal newspaper story over and over again; then stared at the headlines, spellbound. Although her thoughts were benumbed and she could have spent hours in vacant brooding, she was due for her rehearsal at ten o'clock. Before then, she must write to her father: it was too late, but the torturing task had to be done without further guilty delay!

But Anna did not stir from her idle posture, until the town-clock struck ten. Anna jumped up: she would be late to her second rehearsal and disgraced in the eyes of the cast! She whisked on her hat and coat, snatched her type-written part, frightened the elevator boy with her exhortations to hurry, beckoned to a cab outside the door, and in a few minutes stood before Mr. Estrello. Anna was well aware that the manager had done his share in creating the newspaper story, and she attributed his special good humor and his marked deference to her during the rehearsal to pride in his sensational leading lady. Anna could not, however, waste much anger on

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

her employer, for, after all, was it not in the interest of his company to have it advertised as gaudily as possible? So she heaped all her wrath on Mr. Quackenbush, and determined here on the stage, secluded by wings on the one side and heavy curtains on the other, from the indiscreet peering of the world, to lose herself with all her anger and disgust in the throbbing presence of *Eleonora*. To-day she did not heed the other actors, for, when she was not actually speaking herself, she looked over her part; and she acted with a fervor that grew more and more desperate as the rehearsal was drawing toward the end.

"Oh, I wish this rehearsal would never be over!" escaped her lips during a pause.

"My—you must be fond of acting!" cried little Lucy Crane with wide open, admiring eyes, whereupon Anna smiled bitterly and remained silent.

But the rehearsal had an end, and although she walked back to the hotel very slowly, loathing the prospect of meeting Mr. Quackenbush again, there was nothing to do, when she had arrived, but to brave the lobby and flee to her room. There she had a frugal meal in solitude, for it seemed as if in the dining-room all eyes would be fixed upon her with the hungry gaze of curiosity. She had barely finished when the telephone rang, with a shrill clang that made Anna shudder as she snatched up the receiver.

"Mr. Borden is here to see Miss Borden."

She had felt it! The tense foreboding had been creeping through her veins ever since she had laid eyes on the boisterous head-lines this morning, and had weakened her like poison.

She was sick at heart. She longed to have the stairs,

MISS LILY SPANGLE

that she was descending slowly, break down beneath her, to have the fire-alarm called suddenly or to faint at her father's feet.

But when she saw him, proud and austere, standing at the foot of the stairs as if he would not stir from the spot until he had carried out his iron will, Anna felt that she was his daughter, proud like him and as inflexible. She did not want to faint at his feet now—no, she wanted to face him and defend her dear vocation.

When she approached him, Anna's father said never a word, but merely inclined his head slightly and looked at her with a glance horribly expressive. In that glance there were wounded pride, outraged love, anguish and unrelenting sternness, all at once. And Anna was proud of her father, as a mutineer might adore the commander against whom he rebelled; and she steeled her soul for a life-battle.

Anna followed her father into a small, secluded writing-room, then faced him as he stood in front of the mantle-piece, white with anger, but masterful in his repose. There was a moment's silence; Anna lived hard in that moment.

"I was going to write you," Anna spoke first, loathing the tense quiet. "I was going to write this week. That unlucky paper came ahead of me!"

"It is a fine experience," said her father, standing motionless, "to pick up the morning paper and see the disgrace of one's only child in glaring head-lines."

"Disgrace!" Anna's cry was a challenge.

"Yes, disgrace!" he replied in a merciless voice. "I have not come here to argue whether you consider it a disgrace or not to drag my name into the mud."

"Mud!" Anna's voice still had the clang of challenge.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"Don't repeat every word I say!" cried Mr. Borden, while his black eyes were blazing. "You astound me, Anna; I don't know what to make of you! First you leave your family abruptly for a fantastic whim; you wheedle me till I consent unwillingly—well and good; then, after barely six weeks of your lofty, your sacred career, you are tired of it and run away to a cheap melodrama company and, because you know that I would never allow it, keep me utterly in the dark."

"I wrote you——" Anna began to protest.

"Wrote me!" Mr. Borden laughed bitterly. "You wrote me indeed—an occult, winding Malvolio letter, intended to tantalize your father, while you picked forbidden fruit. If it had not been for that outrageous paper, I dare say I could have waited a year before the melodrama star would have condescended to let me know her whereabouts. I am almost grateful to the reporter who told me the truth about my family, horrible as it is."

"Mr. Quackenbush!" said Anna, hoping that her father's old enemy might be a new outlet for his rage.

"What do I care whether it is Mr. Quackenbush or Mr. Fiddlesticks!" Anna's father fairly snarled. But all at once, as though enlightened by a sudden thought, he asked in a milder tone, with a hopeful gleam that dispelled the anger in his eyes: "Do you mean, perhaps, that Mr. Quackenbush invented it all—do you mean that it is not true?"

Anna turned away from his piercing glance: to face a great man in anger, though he was her father, and fight for her vocation was life; but this was sickening, loathesome and made her faint.

"I will tell you how it came about!" she began wearily.

"Then it is true!" he cried fiercely, bounding forward

MISS LILY SPANGLE

like some wild creature let loose. "Anna, how could you do that to me!"

He sank into a chair and seemed for a moment overwhelmed with grief. But Anna stood rooted to the floor. In the sickness of her heart a vision mocked her—a vision of Benvenuto as he looked up at her in boyish surprise when she told him about the veiled letter to her father. Benvenuto should see her father now, broken down because she was going to play *Eleonora*!

"All this seems shocking to you now," she explained firmly, encouraged by the vision, "but some day you will be proud of my career. I didn't ask for this part—I haven't told you yet—but the author of the play begged me to take it——"

"What author?" Anna's father interrupted curtly. The grief on his face had given way again to anger.

"Benvenuto Lugini," said Anna; and the Italian music of the name mocked her like the sound of a flute amid martial strains.

"And where did you meet him?" her father asked; in his tone was hard contempt.

"He was in the hospital for tuberculosis and I nursed him," said Anna, touched even in this moment by the idyllic beauty of the situation. "He is an Italian poet—and he thought—he thought——" should she lay bare her cherished secret now, in this dark hour? "——he thought that I was just like his heroine; so he longed to have me play the part."

Mr. Borden remained untouched by the idyl.

"And the Superintendent—what did she have to say?"

"I stayed till the end of my probationer's term," Anna replied with conscious dignity. "What I did is not in the least like running away. At the end of the pro-

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

bation term, I would have had to sign a contract to stay the rest of the three years—and would you have me do that when I knew that my talent lay in another line?"

"In the line of vaudeville and melodrama!" he returned. "I would have you keep on with what you set out to do. Above all, I would have you ask your father's consent—at least let him know what you are doing. But what am I talking for now? There is no time to lose. You are going home with me immediately on the afternoon train——"

"But I can't," cried Anna, trembling in dismay. "I have a rehearsal at four."

"Rehearsal!" thundered her father, jumping to his feet. "Do you think I came here for tea-talk about theatrical life? You are going to break your connections with this company——"

"I can't!" cried Anna in anguish. "I have a contract—I'll show it to you!"

"No, stay here!" Mr. Borden commanded. "Under no consideration will I let you stay here another night. The sooner you break off, the better. I am even willing to pay the manager a sufficient sum for indemnity. You can give me his name."

This was too much for Anna: all her pride welled up within her to resist this outrage.

"I will not go!" she declared. "Even if I had not signed a contract, I still should have to keep my promise to the poet, and, above all, to myself. Would you give up your career in a minute? My career is what I am. I am called upon to interpret the inspiration of a poet, and thereby to inspire hundreds—thousands——"

"Anna, are you mad?" interrupted her father. "Do you know what it means to be part of a cheap com-

MISS LILY SPANGLE

pany with probably a vulgar manager and actors who represent the lowest social ebb? Do you understand the dangers——”

“You are prejudiced!” cried Anna. “You are snobbish! You have never longed to work for the multitude, to inspire the poor man in the gallery. What do I care whether actors say ‘ain’t’ or not? They are my colleagues, and I shall cast my lot with them.”

“And not with your family, whose name you have stained,” said her father bitterly. “Aunt Sarah will be prostrate; she was quite worn out from the shock when I left her. You haven’t enquired for her once!”

Poor Aunt Sarah! It was the fate of such gentle little natures to suffer unobserved in the conflict of sterner souls.

“I am sorry for Aunt Sarah,” said Anna firmly. “But I cannot sacrifice my vocation for my aunt.”

“And your father?” Mr. Borden’s look was fiercely tense.

“I don’t live for my family,” Anna cried, buoyed up by a terrible courage. “I live and work for the beloved unknown!”

Into this cry Anna had given her soul and in the helplessness that followed Anna remembered how she had spoken the same words to Benvenuto—only to him in joy and glory. And in confusion she cried out: “Oh, Benvenuto, if you only were here!”

Then she saw that her father’s face was white and horrible like the face of a dead man.

“Do you need to invoke a stranger!” he said fiercely. “Anna!”

He bent his head and turned away, and stood like a man bowed by adversity. The sight of him wounded

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

Anna and it seemed as if a soundless scream were going out from her soul. But she must not yield now: she clenched her fists and stood still.

When her father turned round again, the cadaverous pallor had fled from his face, but had left it hard and determined. He told Anna to sit down and drew up a chair toward her.

"I want you to understand," he said in a forced, matter-of-fact tone in which his excitement was vibrating in spite of his efforts, "that as long as you are on the stage, you are not to step inside my house. We are not going to communicate. You shall not receive any more checks from me. I will no longer be responsible for your own capital. Fortunately, the shares I settled on you on your first birthday and what I have added every year will yield you a large income."

"I shan't need all that!" exclaimed Anna. "I am earning my living."

Except for a contemptuous twitch of his lips, Mr. Borden continued without heeding the interruption.

"That will not only enable you to live in the style to which you are accustomed, but will give you freedom to follow your whims. I shall put your affairs into the hands of Mr. Charles Hammond of Clapp and Hammond. You can go to him for advice; he is a very conscientious man. Have you any message for Sarah?"

Anna shook her head. This was a cruel hour. No feeble lisping about forgiveness and regret at this stage of the breach! Anna felt all callous—frozen to the core.

"Then good-bye!" said her father hoarsely, and rose to go.

"Good-bye!" said Anna, and her father walked out of the room, bowed and unsteady, like an old man.

MISS LILY SPANGLE

It was over. She must not look back—never look back, as if a precipice were gaping behind her! If she should look back, she might still run to her father before he left the hotel, and break down in grief and repentance, and beg him to take her home!

She must look forward! "Benvenuto!" her soul cried out. "You are the only friend I have left."

With her father, all the others were lost, too—Aunt Sarah and all her Boston sphere, and the Europeans who would shrug their shoulders in horror. Some of her young friends might want to remain faithful, but their parents would prevent them. Even Clare Norwood must turn her back upon her, because she had left the hospital. All this shot through Anna's mind in a flash, as her soul clung to Benvenuto.

Anna heard her father ask for a time-table, then order a cab. Now he must be gone! Oh, if he were only safe in the train, lest she should look back!

Anna looked at her watch: it was not yet four o'clock, and these two hours had wrought a change in her life that decades did not accomplish in the lives of others! As her rehearsal began at four, she had to hurry to arrive in time. So resolutely she faced her hazardous, gleaming career, and looked forward.

Passionately Anna worked during the rehearsals and studied at night; the theater was now her home and *Eleonora* her soul.

"Bravo!" Mr. Estrello would cry after she had exerted herself in a lively scene till she was trembling from fatigue and excitement. "That's first rate! That'll take all right!"

And such praise from Mr. Estrello was balm to her spirits.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"You act different from all the other actresses in our company," said Lucy Crane one day in a shy, awe-struck voice, when Anna was "treating" her to a soda on the way home from the theater. "Perhaps it is on account of your book-learning!"

"Book-learning!" Anna repeated. "I am not so learned."

But she understood. This poor child Lucy was always complaining that she had no education and that she was no lady, and she seemed to worship Anna for the qualities that she herself could not possess. Lucy took the part of a little girl in the slums of New York, a neighbor of *Eleonora's*, and spoke her lines with an appealing quaintness. The mouse-like, wistful air of the little actress reminded her of Ruth Gregory.

"You know, Lucy," she said, "you make me think of a friend of mine who has a great deal of book-learning; she looks something like you."

"Like me, poor little son-of-a-gun!" cried Lucy, blushing. "Well, ain't that queer!"

Anna wondered how Ruth would like to be compared to an obscure little actress. What was Ruth saying anyway—Ruth, who had first roused Anna out of her idle state—about her old friend's wild career? Perhaps she would mind less than the others, because she had more sense and knew the value of work. Anna even planned to write to her some day, for she had not written a single letter since the memorable day with her father, except to Benvenuto.

"If it weren't for you, Lucy," she confided to her companion, who was contentedly sucking her straw plunged into pink foam, "I should be lonely."

MISS LILY SPANGLE

"Lonely!" repeated Lucy. "You lonely! Why, they all wait on you."

"That's just why," said Anna. "They treat me like a stranger. I want to be treated like one of you."

"No, you don't," said Lucy. "You wouldn't stand it a minute!"

"Perhaps you are right," Anna admitted. "You are much too clever, Lucy!"

For now it occurred to Anna how, during the first week of rehearsals, she had heard the men in the cast call the women by their first names, whereas Lucy and Idella and Gwendolen responded with "Mr. Estrello," "Mr. Leatherbee" and "Mr. Valentine," and how she had said to herself: "If they dare call me Lily, I will make a scene!" But they had not dared to call her Lily and the scene never came about.

It was during the lonely evenings and the Sundays in the hotel that episodes at the theater were reflected in Anna's mind, because during the rehearsals themselves the task of the moment was too absorbing for reflection. The smooth, inane face of Mr. Valentine with the ridiculous lock of hair bobbing up and down his forehead as he made his glib gestures and squinted at her with his amorous, fishy eyes would haunt her suddenly and vanish again like a bubble; or the remembered sight of the coarse, burly Mr. Leatherbee chucking Idella Flanagan under the chin, whereupon Idella and Gwendolen nudged each other and giggled, would make her shudder slightly and wonder if some day she would turn into a Gwendolen Floyd or an Idella Flanagan, and giggle over the pleasantries of Mr. Leatherbee. To be sure, the actors never practiced their jocular endearments on Lucy Crane, but they would shout at the seven-

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

teen-year-old actress: "Come on, kid!" "Hey, sis, wake up, this ain't Sunday-school!" while the meek child suffered in patience. She herself, alone, Anna reflected, was immune from the unpolished address of the actors, for she was not only a lady, but a star, and the pride of Mr. Estrello.

And the night of the first performance was drawing near. For the last rehearsals the host of "supers" appeared, a motley crowd, such as Anna had never seen before, except on the street on Saturday night. There were chorus-girls with gaudy cheeks and a pathetic dash about their tawdry apparel; pale, simple women who looked as if they spent their days working in mills, and men—some rough and noisy, some sheepish, some harmlessly jovial—whom Anna could not classify, however hard she strained her imagination. There was no time, moreover, to inquire after the origin of the "supers" when the success of the play depended upon her. By thinking intensely of her part all day, she let new ideas of improvement spring up in her mind continually, to the bewilderment of Mr. Estrello. Thus, instead of dropping dead conventionally after *Eleonora* had drunk the poison, Anna introduced some realistic stages of death from a certain poison which she had watched in the hospital.

"If that won't take!" Mr. Estrello had said, chuckling, "I don't know what will!"

To Anna's alarm there was no dress rehearsal. She recalled the dress rehearsals for the amateur plays at home, when she and her friends had strutted about in new stiff costumes and had frolicked with wigs put on the wrong way; when stage-fright had been chased away by laughter and blunders covered by the consolation:

MISS LILY SPANGLE

"A bad dress rehearsal makes a good performance!" In those days—remote, though not so very long ago!—Anna had not guessed that some time acting would be to her no longer a frolic, but her life-essence!

The final rehearsal, unembellished though it was by costume and make-up, was satisfactory, and Anna was given a Sunday to rest before the epoch-making exertion of Monday night. On her way from the theater she passed large bill-boards with brilliant pictures of *Eleonora* refusing *Donato*, interpreted by the line: "I will not forsake my husband!" and large-lettered exhortations to "See Miss Lily Spangle, the new tragedy star, presented by Mr. Estrello." It thrilled Anna to watch passers-by stop before these posters and gaze at the pictures with a humble theater-goer's ravenous curiosity.

"Will this little man like me," she would ask herself, "when he looks down on me from his peanut gallery? He shall like me; I will wear myself out for him!"

At last it was Monday night. Anna climbed down the narrow flight of stairs that led to her star's dressing-room.

"Good-luck to you!" Lucy Crane called after her. "You'll carry it off all right!"

"It will either be a failure," Anna cried back, "or a grand success!"

The dressing-room, though it was said to be the best in the theater, was small, the air in it hot and close. The floor was damp and dirty; the furnishings consisted of a little table and a chair, a mirror and a small wash-basin with only cold water, and that ice-cold. The "dresser" who was assigned to Anna welcomed her with a grunt and handled the picturesque garments that Anna had carefully designed with rough, clumsy hands. Anna

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

had arrived early, so that she might spend ample time on the make-up. Lucy had taught her the art of covering her own fair skin with layers of cold-cream, grease-paint and carmine and then toning down the gaudy product with showers of powder. To-night Anna lingered over her make-up with a care and preciseness as if she were painting a miniature, especially when she came to blue-pencil the corners of her eyes and to blacken her eye-brows and lashes which were already conspicuously dark. Confused voices from the other dressing-rooms penetrated into her own cell; the "dresser" was taking down the gay red dress of the Italian nobleman's daughter from the calico-covered wall and spreading out the stiff, rustling silk on the one chair; meanwhile the delirious perfume of the make-up pervaded the hot air and made Anna faint.

If she should fail! Her knees and hands were trembling and a horrible sense of impotence was clutching her like a demon. Oh, if she had followed her father home that critical afternoon, she would be sitting in his library in Boston now, opposite Aunt Sarah, with a free mind and no care in the world. If Aunt Sarah should see her now making hideous her face which had never been tainted by rouge! If her father could peer into this dingy little room and smell the benumbing scent! Suddenly she fully understood for the first time why he had repulsed as a disgrace the idea of a Borden on the stage. Was it the odor of the make-up that had made it clear?

When the attendant had finished dressing her hair and robing her in the scarlet dress for the first act, Anna studiously fastened an artificial geranium over her ear, till she resembled a certain *Carmen* whom she had seen

MISS LILY SPANGLE

in the opera of Berlin. The opera of Berlin! Why must grimacing visions mock her on this all-important night? Kenneth Holcombe had not entered her mind for weeks—months, it seemed!—and now his specter was spying in upon her as she stood before the mirror in her scarlet dress, his eyebrows raised in astonishment, his aristocratic lips curled in disdain. Anna felt dizzy. What was life doing with her, spinning her round like a top!

A knock, and the "dresser" opened the door. It was the call-boy who summoned Anna to the stage! Her heart stood still, for her mind was an absolute blank. Desperately she snatched her part and stumbled up the stairs after the call-boy. In the wings the actors stood crowded, ready for their entrances, with unfamiliarly strained looks on their painted faces. From the stage the voices of Mr. Leatherbee and Miss Floyd, *Eleonora's* parents, sounded clear and solemn in the tense hush of the theater.

"Corking house—chuck full!" whispered Mr. Valentine, and his magic words quickened Anna's pulse and shot a thrill into her benumbed spirits. The house was full! In a few minutes the great audience would hang upon her lips!

Frantically she looked over her first scene, and the lines that had escaped her memory now rushed back at high tide. She threw down her copy and listened with strained ear to the dialogue on the stage. Her cue was Miss Floyd's remark: "*Eleonora* is in the garden——" and she was to enter with a light-hearted: "Good-morning, father!"

Anna's heart throbbed faster and faster while she was listening. How long they were talking there on the

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

stage, while she was pining in the wings, impatient to plunge out into the dazzling light!

Now, almost—now: “*Eleonora* is in the garden——”

Anna skipped on to the stage and cried gaily: “Good-morning, father!”

What was that? A rumbling, swelling, thundering noise! Applause! Oh, beautiful! Life was wonderful! Stage-fright was blown away, all weakness and misgiving were dispelled. Anna acted without effort, as if she were swept along by a mystic force, in exuberant, reckless joy. When Mr. Estrello dashed upon the stage as *Riccardo*, beautified by a youthful wig and a Bohemian artist's suit of black velvet, applause greeted him too, but not the deafening roar that had burst upon *Eleonora*. To Anna Mr. Estrello was for the first time really *Riccardo*, the passionate and touching lover, for he, too, seemed enkindled by the electric inspiration in the air that had set fire to Anna's actress soul. As it seemed to Anna, she was sweeping her rival star along, and he swept her along in turn, till she felt as if she were running a race in a whirlwind.

When the curtain went down, applause rushed upon her ear like music, and Anna stood still, breathless, to listen. Mr. Estrello, evidently likewise excited, seized one of her hands in both of his and cried: “Good work, good work!” Thereupon he beckoned to Miss Floyd and Mr. Leatherbee, who came forward from behind the wings, then to the man who drew back the curtains at his command. Anna found herself exposed once more to the view of the applauding public and bowed to both sides of the house in exuberant delight. The curtains closed and opened again several times and at last, before she knew what Mr. Estrello was doing with her, she was

MISS LILY SPANGLE

standing all alone in front of the closed curtains, greeted by a bewildering sweep of applause.

Deliriously Anna rushed up into her dressing-room to change the elaborate bloom beneath which her cheeks were burning into the pallor that was to enhance her pathetic playing in the second act.

"It was a grand success!" she boasted to the grinning "dresser" because she had to give vent to her overflowing joy. She was quite sure of the second act, now that she had swept through the first act with glory.

"Oh, Benvenuto!" her soul clamored. "If you were here! The joy would overwhelm you!"

The creator of *Eleonora*, she knew, was thinking of her desperately during a feverish, sleepless night in the cool peace of the hospital, while the creature of his fancy was taking a crowded house by storm!

"This dress is more plain like!" The attendant tore Anna's soaring thoughts back to immediate detail. The dress that was to symbolize the *Eleonora* of the slums was plain and gray indeed, but not without an inspired dash of bright green ribbon that Anna had designed, for in this act she was to be not only the faithful wife of *Riccardo*, but also the unwilling enchantress of *Donato*. It would be harder to act with Mr. Valentine than with Mr. Estrello, not only because Leonard Valentine was the lesser actor, but because Anna had conceived a loathing for him that grew at each rehearsal; but at this moment Anna felt equal not only to the second act, but even to Mr. Valentine!

When she stepped upon the stage again, she felt as if she had been playing there every night for ten years, as if she wanted the curtain never to fall. Mr. Valentine, with his insipid face strengthened by ruddy make-

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

up, rose to the glorious occasion and Mr. Estrello, as the melancholy, diseased *Riccardo*, out-acted himself. When the curtain closed the scene in which she had persuaded her husband to leave the dusty, disease-breathing streets of New York for the serene, health-giving Davos where they will play the young care-free lovers once more—Anna was startled to find the act over so soon. Immediately the bowing began to the rhythmic surging of the applause, only this time Anna made her last rapturous bow in front of the curtain hand in hand with Mr. Estrello.

"You're making a grand hit!" he whispered, as he let her precede him through the curtains. "You'll be the rage of the season!"

While her spirits were effervescent with glee, Anna put on the melancholy black dress in which she was to touch the hearts of the audience in the last act and painted on to her face dark lines of resignation and sorrow. This last act must be a test of her art, for it contained not only Benvenuto's most melodious lines, but a pathetic suicide which should affect her dear, unknown hearer to tears.

Inspired by this lacrimose aim, Anna glided through the third act with even a greater relish than the other acts had afforded, and dwelled tenderly on Benvenuto's soulful words.

At last came the drinking of the poison. Anna verily felt the hundreds of eyes upon her, like scorching sun-rays; she felt the keen, exacting manager's glance beneath the amorous mask of Mr. Estrello; she felt the adoring, confident look of Benvenuto, reaching her from his distant confinement through the power of his belief in her. Thus spurred on to daring achievement, Anna drank the

MISS LILY SPANGLE

poison with one desperate draught, staggered, sank on a lounge, writhed and groaned, yet kept her resigned, loving expression, then cried with pathos and passion: "I have loved you too much, Riccardo!" and stiffened into the pose of death. The scene that followed Anna scarcely heard as she lay in her stiff posture and strained her muscles to keep them from relaxing in response to her wild inward ecstasy.

At last the curtain was closed and Anna jumped to her feet, seized Mr. Estrello's outstretched hand and rushed forward once more for the final bows. After the curtains were closed for the night, Mr. Estrello pushed her forward as in the first act, whispering: "Go out alone—they want you!" and when Anna courtesied to the restless crowd of women putting on their hats and men standing still to clap, she felt like stretching out her arms and crying: "Dear listeners! Stay—do not leave me! I love you all, I live for you!"

But she had to step back on to the stage, where men were already moving away the Sanatorium of Davos. Mr. Estrello's praise, the congratulations of the other actors, Lucy Crane's enthusiastic outcry: "You're the dandiest actress I've seen in my life," Anna heard in a trance like distant murmurs and it was not till she drove alone through the midnight streets to her hotel, that the feverish delirium fled and she understood clearly that she was riding home after her first appearance on the stage and that this appearance had been a glorious success.

When she awoke the next morning after a restless night, she sent a long telegram to Benvenuto, describing the glory that they had shared. Then she wondered if she should not send a brief message to her father. To

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

be sure, he had wished no communications and she had not written him a line since their rupture, but to-day she felt in a magnanimous mood and unwilling to hide from her father the proud news that would reach him eventually through the press. Should he look with disdain upon her glory, why nothing would be altered between her and him! So she wrote:

Great success,

ANNA.

And with a light heart she went to the newsstand to look for dramatic news. Who should be sniffing there among the papers but Mr. Quackenbush, who had been invisible since his involuntary interview with Anna! Surely he had seen her act and had written the criticism. Now suddenly her desire to know the reaction of the press on her art was quenched. The presence of Mr. Quackenbush would be embarrassing, and the criticisms could be at best mere shadows of last night's living applause, and if they should be adverse they would only serve to cloud her bright spirits. After all, it was the enthusiasm of the moment that she demanded of her public—applause, loud, spontaneous, inspired—not the newspaper story of some dramatic critic "all sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." And to-night a new audience, yet unconquered, would flock to the playhouse!

The second night Anna felt more confident from the beginning than she had done the night before and, though the unique thrill of the first performance was lacking, she tasted again the sweetness of applause. And each successive night as *Eleonora* she grew more intimately into her part and improved it by new details that slipped into her mind between performances. Her days she

MISS LILY SPANGLE

would spend resting, walking in the sunshine and thinking over her part, till her real day began in her dressing-room of the theater at seven o'clock; and the applause earned by feverish exertion which on the first night had made her delirious like strong wine was now coming to be her daily bread.

Thus a week passed, a most successful week—except for one night spoiled by rain—which Mr. Estrello, nevertheless, considered merely a preparation for New York.

"We'll make a hit in New York, all right," he would say, "sure's we've made one here."

Anna, too, as the week was drawing to a close, sharpened her hope for a dazzling reception in New York, for, after all, New York must decide the career of Lily Spangle! With some alarm, therefore, she realized on Saturday night after the last performance in Providence, while the farewell ovation was still ringing in her ears, that she was tired, that, in fact, her strength was nearly spent. Her last months had consisted of hard unaccustomed work, first at the hospital, then at the theater, and the break with her father, though it had been followed by intense distractions, had, nevertheless, preyed on her nerves. And just now, more than at any other time, she needed her full strength! A vague fright at the prospect of failing in New York seized her as she sat in her room, looking out of the window down on the dark, deserted street. It was dreary to be alone with cheerless forebodings! In this weak moment Anna made up her mind to share the cheap quarters of the company in any obscure corner of New York, rather than to plunge again, night after night, out of the light and warmth of the theater into the cold loneliness of a formal hotel. She would cancel her order at the Plaza Hotel, where

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

she had been accustomed to stay with her father, and thereby escape the complications that were bound to arise if she should be Miss Borden there and Miss Spangle elsewhere, and meet the acquaintances of Anna Borden in the lobby, while Mr. Estrello was asking over the telephone for Miss Lily Spangle. No—she had cast off the old Anna Borden, for the new and glittering Lily Spangle! Only one more luxury she would allow herself as star player, in consideration of her great fatigue: she would travel in the parlor-car to-morrow, even though the others rode in the coach!

The next morning at the station, when she saw Lucy Crane, pale, with deep, dark circles under her eyes, dragging a heavy bag and panting from the exertion, Anna, in a hurried whisper, invited her to a seat in the parlor-car. Lucy beamed with gratitude and cried: "Oh, then I won't have to be in with them—an' they shan't tease all the way!"

In the train the poor child was in raptures over the easy chairs with "them cute napkins for the head," over the candy and the illustrated magazines that her hostess offered her, so that Anna almost blushed at the idea of bestowing so much bliss by means of a "handful of silver."

"I ain't goin' to live with the company," said Lucy who grew talkative as her cheeks brightened from warmth and ease. "I'm goin' home to my ma."

"Oh, I'm sorry!" Anna replied. "Because I was going to live with the company from now on."

"You ain't goin' to none of your swell places any more?" exclaimed Lucy with astonishment.

"No," said Anna. "I want to be with the others."

"Don't you do it!" cried Lucy. "You'll get sick of

MISS LILY SPANGLE

them others soon enough! I've traveled with that gang, and I tell you, I was glad to get home, though my home's nothing to boast of. Oh, how they used to boss me and that Miss Flanagan—the fat old thing—made me brush her clothes and unpack her things—and when I'd strike, she'd be so cross in the train, I'd rather do it than not. But they won't boss you, Miss Spangle——”

“Why don't you call me Lily?” asked Anna.

“No,” said Lucy. “I'd rather call you Miss Spangle—you're the star, you know. What's the matter?”

Anna, who was looking through a New York Sunday paper, had started suddenly, and now showed Lucy a picture and the headlines:

BOSTON SOCIETY GIRL ON STAGE

MISS ANNA BORDEN OF BOSTON TO APPEAR
UNDER STAGE-NAME “MISS LILY SPANGLE”

“Oh!” cried Lucy. “Is that your real name?” Evidently she had not seen the Boston papers. “Ain't that a stunning picture! Is that the sort of gown you wear at home?”

Anna did not care any more what the press said about her; the rage that she had conceived against Mr. Quackenbush before the meeting with her father now seemed to her a foreign and incomprehensible emotion and, in fact, she realized that a sensational advertisement of this kind tended to fill a house.

When the train slowed into the Grand Central Station, Anna could not help thinking of her arrival here, not yet three months ago, on her pilgrimage to the haunt of

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

service and toil, throbbing with hope for the unknown future—the future which, unveiled, was now a live present, begetting a new veiled future of novelties and thrills.

Reluctantly Anna said good-bye to Lucy, who was going home, and joined the main party, which resembled a flock of sheep headed by Mr. Estrello as shepherd. The manager gallantly carried her suit-case, helped her into the street-car and repeatedly expressed his surprise that she should have chosen to reside with the company. When Anna, tired and bewildered after a noisy ride with the chattering actors and a procession along Broadway, at last reached the narrow, obscure Hotel Lincoln, their destination, and waited in the small dingy hall while Mr. Estrello was registering the names of the party, her spirits sank and she thought dreamily that the back-yard of an actor's castle in the air was over-grown with weeds. Anna's room—the best in the house—was primitive, but decorated appropriately with pictures of famous actresses. Overcome by a leaden fatigue, she did not join the others at supper, but stayed in her room and soon went to sleep.

When she woke up early the next morning to the din of work-a-day New York, her week of glory in Providence seemed a dream and she felt once more a complete beginner, helpless before a gigantic task. The theater, where rehearsals were held all the morning in order to accustom the cast to the new stage, was much larger than the house at Providence, and Anna's voice seemed to evaporate in the great empty hall.

"Everything depends on you, Miss Spangle!" said Mr. Estrello, rubbing his hands nervously. "All New York has been reading about you in the Sunday papers. The day is fair, and we're going to have a full house. Now

MISS LILY SPANGLE

it's up to you to make this play the success of the season!"

These words shot through Anna and, although her head ached and her feet felt as if they were tied with leaden weights, she throbbed once more with the love of adventure. Oh, how she pitied the "super" in the corner chewing gum while she waited for her turn to appear, who had nothing to do but to be a part of the crowd! Anna, the star, would dazzle or sink into utter darkness!

"I promise you," she said to her manager, as she vibrated from head to foot with a fierce pride, "that to-night shall be a great success."

The promise was rash, Anna knew as soon as she had given it, but it made her taste the intoxicating essence of her chosen life, and therefore she was glad. Duty-bound, now more than ever, to store her strength for the night, she slept all the afternoon and woke up with a clear head and a heart steeled for any obstacle to glory. Indeed, she felt disembodied—one tense, desperate will.

Her dressing-room in the theater was even smaller than the one in Providence and in the corner of the unswept floor was a pool of water. Running water there was none, only a cracked basin and pitcher. The mirror, too, was cracked. But what were wash-basins and mirrors in this hour? Her attendant, a sharp little busybody, was garrulous, but Anna did not listen. She accomplished her make-up with a sure hand and fixed her mind on her opening lines in the first act.

As she stood in the wings, listening for her cue, it was not stage-fright to-night that made her half-faint, but a harrowing anticipation of hard work——

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"Eleonora is in the garden——" Her cue!

And Anna rushed upon the stage, as a diver, who has stood contemplating a dark, gurgling sea, plunges head-long into the unfathomed depth.

"Good-morning, father!"

Where was the applause that had followed her entrance automatically every night in Providence? Her own voice sounded harsh and hard in the stubborn silence.

But she would make them applaud, she would force them to admire! A fierce determination prompted her to play as she had never played before, a fighting spirit with which she fought the hostile audience and was bound to conquer. In her fury Mr. Estrello, who hitherto had always responded with elasticity to her own growing ardor, to-night affected her like an irresponsive broom-stick whom she would like to throw into the corner, that she might fight her battle alone and win.

The curtains closed. Exhausted and dizzy, Anna held her breath. Applause, a violent burst of applause! Dear audience—from an enemy grown into the sweetest of friends—how she longed to clasp the many-headed creature that was showering upon her the mighty organ-peals of generous applause!

Three bows with Mr. Estrello and one alone—then the second act, now a joy to play! When the second act, too, was completed, and Anna found herself once more bowing her thanks for the coveted applause, she felt suddenly overcome—by what? She was trembling violently, her heart beat with alarming speed, and her mind was a horrible blank.

"Mr. Estrello!" she whispered, when the curtain had

MISS LILY SPANGLE

closed upon her. "Do you think I can go through the last act?"

"Why, you're doing fine!" he cried in wild excitement. "What do you mean? You must!"

Why stop and explain that her strength was spent? There was, verily, "but to do or die!"

As she played the last tragic act, her lines spoke themselves, her steps and gestures moved themselves, while Anna, the actress, was oblivious of all but a deadly will to go on—on to the end!

And the end came: the dead *Eleonora* was awakened with the trumpet blast of furious applause! Anna reeled forward and bowed—bowed again and again. Where was she? What was that squirming mass before her, that jungle of wriggling heads and arms? Where was she? At a great court-ball—at the pier waiting to embark on a steamer—in a crowd on the street——? She stepped back between the curtains already closed. Who were these people rushing upon her—that man with the dark, smooth face? It was all over any way—all over—the air was stifling——

She fell in a faint on the hard stage floor.

CHAPTER VIII

COLLEAGUES

THAT was my most wonderful night on the stage, Lucy!" Anna declared, while she was musing over her make-up box, in the little damp dressing-room between act two and act three. "I fainted when it was over, simply because I had spent every ounce of my strength. I had been living in one continuous suspense up to that night and I had to make the audience sit up and listen—so I strained and strained, till I collapsed—Oh, but it was intense, it was fine! And to think, Lucy, that it was only three weeks ago!"

"Well," Lucy replied placidly, "you've been acting every night since then, except Sundays—that makes it seem long. Wait till you've given this play a hundred nights, and you'll wish you'd never cut loose from your home!"

Anna sighed: A hundred nights yet to come, and she felt as if she had been painting on the pallor for the third act at least three hundred times!

"When I think of that first night——" she mused on—"how excited I was, how I worried about every little intonation in every line! And now I can go through all the antics of my part in my sleep!"

"Things like that do lose their relish," said the philosophic Lucy, while she voluntarily was hanging up Anna's dress in place of the usual attendant who was ill. "Now I like my part pretty well, but I don't care for it

COLLEAGUES

so awfully much. There ain't much to it, you know."

"What kind of part should you like to play?" asked Anna, for this seventeen-year-old actress was the one member of the cast with whom she would hold leisurely discourse.

"Oh, I tell you," Lucy answered with a wistful light in her large, gray eyes. "I saw a play once, that was just lovely. It was called 'Little Lord Fauntleroy' and a little girl had the star part—I don't suppose she was more than twelve years old! But I'm small, I could take the part all right. Oh, I'd just love to act in a pretty play like that. It was just too sweet for words when the little boy said good-bye to his mother, in his velvet suit with the big lace collar——"

"Don't you like our play?" asked Anna, as she whitened her hands with a chalky fluid.

"Oh, not so awfully well," Lucy replied conscientiously. "I like the songs and some of the lines—but I don't care much for them harrowing kind of plays."

"I agree," Anna responded. "I like the songs and some of the lines, but I don't——"

She stopped short. Benvenuto! Oh, she must keep her lips from speaking guile about his play, the child of the dream and music of his lonely spirit. She had not seen him now since the Sunday after the first performance in New York. But how could she see him again when the audience after the first week had shrunk alarmingly, and the newspapers spoke lightly of the play? She could not bring a suffering poet, thirsting for a drop of glory, a clipping like the last one that she had glued into her scrap-book:

If it had not been for the interesting phenomenon of a young Boston society woman turning into an able and at-

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

tractive actress, the rather childish melodrama could not have maintained itself so long.

Poor Benvenuto! Tears almost rose to Anna's eyes as she thought of that Sunday afternoon when she had dared to announce herself at the hospital as a friend of Mr. Lugini's, then had braved the cold, reserved greeting and the unreserved stare of the head nurse, Miss Pyle, the sly whisperings of the other nurses and the frank bewilderment of Baffi and Croce, till she was safe at the side of her poet. How he had kissed her hands in rapture when she boasted of her success; how he had raved of a new play for her to act next season, which he must think out immediately; how he had trembled, and his eyes had gleamed in feverish ecstasy!

The call-boy peeped in at the half-open door. There was no more time for tender musing when work called—daily, inevitable work, monotonous drudgery! And the house was not even half full!

"I'll be here waiting for you when the act is over," Lucy called after her.

"All right!" answered Anna. "Read the magazine I brought for you in my bag."

When Anna came back after the last act, piqued by the feebleness of the applause, she found the faithful child waiting for her.

"Won't your mother worry if you stay here so late, Lucy?" she asked, for Lucy appeared only in the second act.

"Oh, no, mother's asleep," the little actress replied. "I've got the key and I can stay out as late as I please. I just love to talk with you, Miss Spangle—it's the only fun I've got."

A gust of pity scattered the clouds of Anna's own

COLLEAGUES

discontent: Lucy's life must be much drearier still than her own! For Lucy, night after night, played a minor part instead of a leading rôle, and was mocked as "the kid" instead of being admired as "the lady." And who knew what sorrows lurked in Lucy's home?

"Say!" Lucy began in a shy tone of mysterious wistfulness.

"What is it?" asked Anna encouragingly.

"I told ma and my sister Kate about you, and they said you'd be too stuck up to come to see me—would you now?"

"No, indeed!" cried Anna, elated at the prospect of bestowing a benediction by her mere presence. "What did they mean? I'll come any day you want."

"Would you? Would you now?" Lucy clapped her hands and danced about in the little narrow dressing-room. "Will you come Sunday?"

Anna agreed to call on Lucy the following Sunday, whereupon the child burst into song.

"They'll wonder what's going on here," said Anna as she opened the door to the narrow corridor, ready to descend toward the street. But she stood rooted on the threshold. Mr. Valentine was twining his lanky arm round the shoulders of a chorus-girl and kissing her in the shadows. On seeing Anna at the door, Mr. Valentine and his fellow-culprit started and fled down the stair-case.

"If that don't beat everything!" cried Lucy in righteous rage. "That was Floss, as sure as I'm alive!"

"Your cousin?" gasped Anna.

"My cousin Florence Crane," declared Lucy sententially, with a solemn nod. "Ain't she a disgrace to the family?"

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

Anna could not help reflecting that Mr. Valentine had made love to her on the stage scarcely an hour ago. Such was the lot of an actress! She consoled herself, however, that only Mr. Estrello had the privilege of embracing *Eleonora*, and Mr. Estrello was at least on a somewhat higher level than Mr. Leatherbee and Mr. Valentine!

Followed by Lucy, Anna descended the stair-case down which the couple had fled, and when she stepped out of the stagnant, perfumed air of the theater into the cold crisp December wind she drew a deep breath of relief. Usually her own cab was the only vehicle in the little alley in front of the stage-entrance, but to-night a great limousine was standing directly before the door.

"Gee, what's up?" whispered Lucy.

In the same instant three fashionable young men jumped out of the car, and three girls rushed out of the theater to meet them. In the whirlpool of bobbing hats, waving boas, swinging elbows, Anna could not recognize the faces of the sirens, till one of them turned round and caught sight of Lucy.

"Hello, kid!" she cried. "I'm goin' on a joy-ride! Don't you wish you was goin'?"

"Floss!" Lucy almost screamed. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself? You're a disgrace to the family."

Florence Crane stepped to Lucy's side.

"Oh, come on!" she said in her tin-toned voice subdued to a whisper. "You're jealous, that's all. But I wish you could come along; it would do you good—only there ain't enough fellers to go round."

"Can't you stay home just this once?" Lucy pleaded feebly.

COLLEAGUES

"Oh, what's the harm?" her cousin returned. "A girl's got to have a night of fun!"

The light of the street-lamp fell on the exuberantly defiant face of the chorus-girl, with its roguishly twinkling dark eyes and saucy, bright red lips. As she stood talking to her sober little cousin, she did not, at first, notice the presence of the leading lady; when, however, her glance finally met Anna's, the roguish light in her eyes gave way to a hostile gleam, as if she had been poisoned by the contempt which Anna, no doubt, was breathing forth.

"I must be gettin' on," said Floss, glancing at the party in front of the limousine. "They'll take my head off for keepin' 'em waitin'."

And Florence whisked off, while her jaunty red willow-plume bobbed up and down, and her long featherboa waved in the wind. She skipped into the motor-car, which the other two damsels had already boarded, the three young men followed, the door was closed with a bang, and the car sped out of sight.

Such were Anna's colleagues! She and Lucy hardly spoke on their ride through the restless streets with their flashing electric advertisements, with their throngs pouring out of theaters, moving-picture shows and restaurants, and when Anna had left Lucy at her home, a great tenement house in a narrow, obscure side-street of Third Avenue, she rode to the hotel, all alone in the wild, gaudy city, with a dizzy brain and a heavy heart. And yet it seemed to her in this moment that she would rather ride on forever through the rough, but indifferent streets than go back into the hotel where Miss Floyd and Miss Flanagan might be giggling on the stairs and Mr. Valentine lounging in the lobby.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

Why had she ever conceived the whim to live with the company? She saw enough of her colleagues at work in the evenings, and she longed to forget them—all except Lucy—during the idle day. And yet, she reflected, whenever she had tried a few days of solitary roaming in the city, of solitary dining in cold, unfriendly restaurants, like any homeless adventurer, she had returned to her squalid haven of tedious jokes and jarring laughter to escape from chilling silence. But to-day a loathing gripped her fast, and she dreaded the end of the ride. The saucy, hostile glance of Florence Crane haunted her like a nightmare, and when she thought of Idella and Gwendolen and the other colleagues, the challenging grin of the chorus-girl seemed to grow infectious and spread over all the faces, till a ring of grinning creatures mocked her in a hideous vision and made her shudder.

The cab stopped, the magic of her ugly dreams was dispelled, and she ran up the stairs of her detested hotel. The loud, excited voices of Mr. Estrello and Mr. Leatherbee were the first sounds that she heard as she entered the hall, and immediately she saw Mr. Leatherbee—his butcher's face redder than before—strike a table with his fist, and Mr. Estrello jump from his seat, stamping his foot lustily. As soon as he caught sight of Anna, however, he subdued his manner and scolded Mr. Leatherbee:

"Will you stop when a lady is by?"

Anna walked upstairs calmly: it was not the first time that she had stumbled upon a heated dramatic scene off the stage, since she had cast her lot with the Estrello Company. And the balm to her wounded spirits, in such instances, was always the hush that fell upon Mr. Estrello and all that were with him when she, Anna, loomed up

COLLEAGUES

on their horizon. She had not dreamt that adventurous morning in Providence in the parlor of Hotel Welcome that the commonplace, disappointing actor-manager, as she had found the powerful man who held her career in his coarse hands—that this same barely tolerable Mr. Estrello would one day represent the fairest flower of chivalry in the sphere of her colleagues! And with a sigh of resignation Anna walked down the poorly lighted hall toward her little room.

In the seclusion of her four dreary walls she slipped into her rose-tinted, Japanese kimono, a remnant from days of ease and, resting her elbows on the square table in the middle of the room, leaned her head on her hands, thus to brood, unwilling to go to bed, into the weary night.

There was not even a mysterious, anonymous bouquet, such as she had been wont to cull from the dust of the stage-floor, to enliven her faint spirits to-night with silent perfumed flattery. Notes from unknown writers fervently begging the privilege of a meeting after the play had ceased long ago, and now even the flowers were grudging her, like the applause. Perhaps, if she had rent the fetters of her conventional past, if she had answered one of those occult notes, who knows but that some new and rich adventure might have spiced the hardships of her life. No, no! The saucy face of Florence Crane flashed into her vision, a ghostly sight, yet plain flesh and blood! Anna shook her head wearily: how cheap, how utterly cheap——!

No, the air she breathed was not the foul vapor of crime, not the hothouse air of gorgeous vice, such as the old pages of the "Arabian Nights" still gave forth, or the rococo romances. No—and Anna shuddered at

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

the word—her daily sphere was vulgar, utterly vulgar!

All at once Anna saw herself as she sat forlorn in the little, bare room, with Aunt Sarah's eyes—those dim decorous eyes—and once more understood her family's contempt. The "glitter" of the stage was tarnished, indeed. But she would not give up now and slouch home, like the prodigal son, after living on swine's fare.

To-morrow would be Tuesday—then Wednesday, a long distance from Tuesday.

"To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow,
Creeps on with petty pace——"

she murmured. Macbeth! Where was the day when to be an actress meant to act *Lady Macbeth*? A sudden onrush of memories bowed her down, and big tears fell on the bare table. How lovely was the night when she had played *Rosalind* and, with roses and sweet peas in her arms, had welcomed her congratulating friends! For weeks after that night she had lived in the Forest of Arden, while *Rosalind's* melodious lines were ever on her lips. It seemed that one must remain a dilettante to taste the sweetness of art ungalled! And Anna, the professional, sighed into the cheerless night.

When Anna woke up the next day, it was almost noon. She was wont to sleep long, because the dull mornings could bear shortening. To-day, however, the crystalline vigor of the cold December air and the strong sunshine that gilded even her gray room made her welcome the day that brushed away the cobweb memories of tinselled nights and beckoned her out of doors.

"I will go up-town to-night!" Anna promised herself, clapping her hands at the prospect, for she had hitherto confined her promenades to down-town districts, so that

COLLEAGUES

she should not be troubled with past associations. But to-day the sunshine drew her to the broad streets, the dignified shop-windows and the sleek passers-by, who all looked out into the world as if they had bathed and breakfasted in peace. Fifth Avenue was bright in its Christmas array. The shop windows displayed their "attractive holiday gifts" among garlands of holly and red ribbon, and about the swarming shoppers there was a festive bustle. Before a bookstore Anna stood examining with wistful eyes the new holiday editions of the "Rubaiyat," Dickens' "Christmas Carol," Ruskin's "Pleasures of Learning" and all the old friends. Could she not choose a single Christmas book to send away this season? Must the rupture between her old world and her new be so icily complete? If there were only one old friend—Yes, Ruth, who had written her a gay friendly letter only a few weeks ago, to Ruth she would send a Christmas gift. With this excuse Anna entered the shop, and as she handled the beautiful leather books, a longing broke out irresistibly. Oh, for the fire-side at home and the library, the serene and dignified companionship of books! With an exquisitely illustrated edition of Ruskin's "Seven Lamps of Architecture"—Ruth's Christmas gift—under her arm, Anna strolled up Fifth Avenue toward the Park, and in the festive buzz of the street and the brilliant sunshine she forgot that she was anything but a young damsel of ease who was choosing pretty gifts to surprise her friends in a carefree home.

Before the Plaza Hotel, with its dazzling white against the turquoise sky, stood a long row of motor-cars, waiting while one after the other shed its frilled passengers under the portico.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"Some big tea must be going on," said Anna half aloud, "or perhaps a wedding reception!" Drawn by idle curiosity, she walked to the entrance and watched the guests arrive. As one of the cars passed by her, a stout callous face at the window startled Anna and soon a young man who skipped out of the car first was helping out Mrs. Hamilton, radiant in a waving chinchilla coat and darting at the young cavalier the sweetish smile that Anna knew so well. Then followed Natalie in faultless lavender, flashing a homage-exacting glance through her dense, black veil at the same young man, who was laughing politely. The next moment all three had vanished into the hotel, but Anna remained spell-bound where she had been gazing after the pompous trio, like Cinderella watching her sisters rustle away to the ball.

"Natalie, Natalie!" a voice cried bitterly within her. "How sleek your life is, how pleasantly respectable!" It was a dull life, to be sure, without music, but also without harsh noises and vulgar laughs. It was a formal life, and though the forms might be empty they were at least smooth and full of grace!

And the leading lady of the Estrello Melodrama Company, on her lonely wandering in the park, wondered how Mrs. Hamilton would have reacted had she recognized Anna standing in the shade. Would she come to see her act this week? Ah, never, never—the idea!

Dusk had sunk on New York and the lights of Broadway were flashing when Anna came back to her cheerless shelter, weary from wandering about and full of sad musing. In the hall the gas light beneath the red shade was burning low, and a strong odor of musk filled the air. Anna was not in a mood to encounter her col-

COLLEAGUES

leagues, not even Mr. Estrello. Poor Mr. Estrello! She had been evading him during the last days because the declining popularity of "Eleanora" seemed to weigh on his mind; and who but she, Lily Spangle, was responsible for his dark mood?

So Anna rushed directly up the narrow stairs in the dim light, but unwillingly stopped halfway, for no other than Mr. Estrello was stumbling toward her from the upper floor. He was singing in a hoarse, nasal voice:

"Say, will you be my darling—Oh, oh!"

He reeled along helplessly, so that Anna thought with a shudder: "He has been drinking in his disappointment," for the manager had hitherto set a standard of sobriety, even when Mr. Leatherbee and Mr. Valentine had obviously been kindling their dull spirits at the bar.

And now Mr. Estrello was grinning at her sheepishly, and winking with frank vulgarity. Anna was about to turn back, so as to avoid a meeting, when she felt a heavy clutch on her shoulder and was sickened all at once by a vile breath of whiskey close to her face. With an outcry of rage she pushed back the offender, swiftly, like a wild tigress, so that he staggered against the railing. Then she flew to her room and locked the door.

So it had come to this! The magic ring that enclosed the leading lady was broken, and she was on a level with Floss, the chorus-girl! In a fever of disgust, Anna paced up and down and fiercely clenched her fists. Of course, she must leave at once! She had borne with the Estrello Company so long, despite all disillusionings, because the manager, at least, had not grated like a harsh discord on her soul, but now——

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

Anna unlocked the lowest bureau drawer, and unfolded her contract:

This contract can be canceled or annulled by either party upon giving two weeks' notice——

Two weeks more could be endured with the vista of freedom beyond. She would cancel her contract with Mr. Estrello to-morrow morning, when he would be sober; she would be deaf to his protests. During the next two weeks she would evade him by day, and play her part mechanically at night, and then—then what?

She could not go home and beg forgiveness—no, her father's triumph and Aunt Sarah's pitying smile would be too humiliating after all her bitter hardships! Neither would she seek another position on the stage, for the stage now seemed altogether loathsome. So there remained nothing to do, but to drift independently from New York in the winter to Atlantic City in the spring, to Bar Harbor in the summer, to the Adirondacks in autumn, an aimless pleasure-seeker, fallen disastrously from her fine wagon hitched to a star.

Between Scylla and Charybdis, Anna stood forlorn: either drudgery with daily growing disgust, or—defeat. Defeat so soon! A vision of her father mocked her, her father with his grim face twisted into a smile of contempt that made her faint to look upon, and all at once a host of grimacing faces—Aunt Sarah's, Mrs. Hamilton's, her uncle's, the Ambassador's, everybody's—seemed to crowd about her, staring at her and smiling, all with the same triumphant, sickly smile of contempt. Defeat was horrible! Better than suffer defeat would be to toil on and wait till some brighter vista should be

COLLEAGUES

disclosed. And Anna folded up her contract and locked it once more in the lowest drawer.

At breakfast the next morning Mr. Estrello blinked at Anna like a wounded sheep, and fairly quaked beneath her haughty glance. After all, Anna reflected, she was still feared, and she could tolerate this life, if it were not for the audiences that thinned out more and more each night!

"When are we going to start for Albany?" she heard Mr. Valentine's voice say in the hall. Albany indeed! She had forgotten that soon the period of travel must begin, the long train-rides with the company, the weary arrivals in noisy cities or in dark one-horse towns an hour before appearing on the stage; the squalid inns, the midnight packing or even midnight journeys after the performances—all the allurements of a traveling actress' life that Lucy had often described to her with gentle horror.

Poor Lucy! Immersed in her own immediate woes, Anna had not been thinking of her small humble friend, but she would surely seek her home on the coming Sunday. Anna was looking forward to this visit, as to a light spot in a dense forest. If only the Sundays did not have to be earned by arduous Saturday nights! Never before had Anna longed for the Sabbath blessing as now when the weeks were loud and laborious, and the Sundays offered at least some ease and peace.

Saturday night! If Saturday night was not successful, then there was no hope, and on Saturday night Anna felt with quick prophetic heart beats, while she was painting her lips the tiresome bright scarlet, that to-night the audience would shrink to a pitiful few. While

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

she was acting, Anna avoided glancing at the unresponsive audience, and only the weak, scattered applause dispelled the illusion, with which she tried frantically to fool herself, that the house was filled. Mr. Estrello, however, who still maintained his pose as apologetic lamb, did not complain, and told Anna between the second and third act, by way of consolation:

"The house ain't full to-night. They're savin' up for the Christmas *matinée*."

"The Christmas *matinée*!" Anna shrieked, and checked an impulse to jump at Mr. Estrello. To have to act on Christmas afternoon was slavery! Anna had not dared to think of her Christmas—her Christmas day next week Friday, forlorn and woeful in her bare, dismal room—but this surpassed the most desperate surmise. Like an automaton she pushed through the third act with a faint sense that her soul was decaying within her limp body.

"Lucy!" she said feebly when the play was over. "Did you always have to act on Christmas Day?"

"Sure!" said Lucy in a sharp voice that rang with the callousness of accustomed pain. "And Christmas Eve, too."

"That makes me very sad," Anna moaned. "I shan't be a cheerful guest to-morrow; your family will think me a fiend."

"Oh, no, they've been waiting for you so long," begged Lucy. "Do come!"

"Oh, very well," cried Anna, as she flung her slipper against the wall. "I'll stay in bed all morning, and cry and cry all my tears away, so that I shall have to be cheerful again in the afternoon. I am longing to come into a home. Dear me, Lucy, I haven't set my foot on

COLLEAGUES

the threshold of a home since I left my own in September."

The next day—the precious Sunday—Anna carried out her program and, when she had cherished her grief between dreams and sobs all the forenoon, and endured one more Sunday dinner with her colleagues in resignation, she started out to find the tenement home of Lucy's mother.

As the day was mild for December and the sun shining pleasantly, the side streets were swarming with children and garrulous crowds stood in the open doorways of the drugstores and saloons. Greek and Italian sounded gay to Anna's ear, and harmonized with the red and yellow kerchiefs of the women under the scant stretches of bright blue sky that shone between the high roofs. Anna's heart beat gaily once more, as if it were saying: "They are waiting for me in suspense, they expect me to fly in at their window on the wings of a seraph."

And she recognized the elated tremor that used to buoy up her spirits in her triumphant days in Berlin when, in view of festively illumined windows, she knew with exquisite certainty that all the inmates of the house were watching for her arrival, as for moonrise.

The house was one of a monotonous brick block in a narrow alley. Two curly-headed little boys were playing on the doorsteps and a stout black-eyed woman in a scarlet woolen shawl stood at the door, complacently staring at Anna.

"Who d'ye want?" the woman asked with immobile face and a condescending gleam of curiosity in her beady eyes.

"Mrs. Crane," Anna replied meekly.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"Four flights up," snapped the woman, and Anna climbed up the worn and narrow wooden stairway.

The wall-paper of elaborate and large-figured design had large tears at capricious intervals and in a few places the banisters were broken. A muffled hum of voices from behind doors and a faint nondescript but quite unlovely odor followed Anna up to the fourth floor. As the two doors in the narrow corridor were closed, Anna knocked on one of them at random. It was opened timidly by a little wrinkled woman who seemed to Anna all white: her dress was white calico, her skin was white, her hair snow-white, her trembling hands were white and even her lips pale.

"Lucy," the woman called in a shy, angelic voice. "This must be the lady."

Lucy flew across the room.

"Oh, Miss Spangle!" she cried, seizing Anna's hand. "I'm so happy you've come at last. Mother and I have been watching out of the window."

Lucy took off Anna's coat and pushed one of the three kitchen chairs to the stove, where the hot water kettle was humming pleasantly.

"What a cheerful room!" remarked Anna genuinely, for, though this kitchen living-room was bare and small, the objects in it—the plain well scrubbed table with only a lamp and a tin dish full of crippled green apples upon it, the small ice-chest, the ironing board, a shelf holding a few books and a calendar on the wall—all had the severe beauty of utility, and afforded Anna no small relief from the tawdry gay pictures and frills at the hotel.

"Oh well, we're just plain folks, you know," said the little white woman. "But we like it here pretty well.

COLLEAGUES

Of course, it's all very plain and simple, you know. But when I come home in the evenin's after standin' in the steam on those hot floors all day—I work in a laundry, perhaps Lucy told you—well, when I come home in the evenin's, and my daughter Kate has cooked the supper and we sit here and have the evenin' for ourselves, you know, to do a little mendin' or read the papers and just rest—why I think it's real pleasant here. I only wish Lucy didn't have to stay out so late at night. I get scared to death thinkin' somethin' will happen to her comin' through the streets alone in the dark. Nobody ever thought to take her home except only you, Miss Spangle; you've been awful kind to the kid."

"Lucy will make her mark some day," said Anna. "She has more talent than I have."

"Oh, pshaw!" cried Lucy. "The idea! More talent than the star!"

"Well, it's a hard life on the stage!" Mrs. Crane went on. "It takes a mighty long time to get ahead. And those horrid trips! When Lucy's away, I just count the days till she comes home again. Because she can be at home at day-time, you know, and look after the rooms and get breakfast. My other daughter Kate has to start for her work at half past six every mornin'. She don't get through till seven o'clock at night, and often she's kept overtime. Then when she comes home she's so tired, I'm afraid she's just goin' to drop. So I say, when I see her like that: 'Look here, Kate, I'm goin' to get supper to-night; you just set down and rest yer-self.' Of course, Lucy is gone to the theater by that time—well, well," the eager little woman broke off. "There's Kate back from next door. Kate, don't get

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

startled. Here's Miss Spangle, the great actress who's been so kind to Lucy."

Kate came sidling in, a meager, frail wisp, with a face like Lucy's, only sharpened, distorted into a look of suspicion, alertness and exhaustion.

"Pleased to see you here, Miss Spangle," she said, looking at Anna with sad gray eyes. "Did you find yer way all right? It's pretty far from up-town."

"Oh, I didn't come from up-town," said Anna, not without pride. "I live down-town with the other actors of the company."

"Oh, you do," Kate Crane responded wearily. "Then perhaps our place don't seem so awful plain after all. You must excuse my looks, Miss Spangle," she added, as she took off her large, checkered apron. "I've been washin' my clothes. It's mighty sad when you have to do your washin' on Sundays, but there ain't no other time to do it. Evenin's I'm just too tired for any use, after stitchin' at the machine all day."

"Well, after all, Kate," piped in Lucy, who looked displeased at the melancholy note her mother and sister had struck, "you needn't complain. You've got all Christmas Day to wear your glad rags on, and Miss Spangle and I've got to work Christmas afternoon and evening—and evening, mind you! What do you say to that?"

"Hard luck!" said Kate. "That's a shame!"

"We must make the most of Christmas morning," said Anna with a vain attempt to twist her wry face into a smile. There was an air of depression in the little room which at first had seemed so cheerful in its frank simplicity. It seemed as if Kate had blown in a dark cloud. And there was silence.

COLLEAGUES

"Come on, now, Miss Spangle!" cried Lucy heartily. "You don't want to hear all our troubles. Tell us something about your life before you went on to the stage—about the stylish parties, and about your home. How many servants do you keep?"

Anna shook her head wearily: to this deluded child she was a fairy godmother from a remote and dazzling realm, and in this moment Anna did not feel inspired to play the part.

"I've broken with my home, you know," Anna said meekly. "I'm really quite homeless now. So you must let me come to see you often."

"Oh, you're fooling!" cried Lucy. "I bet you've got lots of nice relations and friends in New York, and they'll send you lovely Christmas presents."

"No, they won't," said Anna. "They'll treat me as if I were dead. You see," and Anna laughed lightly, "I am not the spoiled creature you think me."

"Oh, but I don't believe you," Lucy persisted. "Tell me—how did you use to spend your Christmas at home?"

Anna could resist Lucy's wistful, curious eyes no longer and, as she lapsed into visionary memories of snug, bygone years, she told the Crane family of the big lighted Christmas tree in her father's library, where her aunts and uncles and nearest friends would gather in festive spirits and her little cousins dance about and unpack their presents in glee; and she told about their Christmas dinner with its nuts and figs and raisins and holly ribbons and branches of pine and mistletoe—for she saw that the eyes of Mrs. Crane and Lucy were lustrous with the romantic joy in pleasures unpossessed. Only Kate, who was perching on the edge of Lucy's chair, sat listening dully with a weary smile.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"I love to hear about nice times like that," said Mrs. Crane, in a genial voice like a cat's purr, as she rubbed her wrinkled white hands. "It almost makes me feel as if I was havin' them myself."

"You never did have 'em and you never will have 'em," said Kate bitterly.

"Oh, perhaps you will some day," cried Lucy childishly. "Wait until I'm a great actress like Miss Spangle, and you'll all be famous."

Just then boisterous footsteps were heard on the stairs outside and the door was flung open with a roaring: "Hullo, girls!"

Florence Crane, the chorus-girl, flew into the room, like the flash of an electric advertisement in a dark street, muffled in furs and veiled by dense black lace through which her rouged face shone mysteriously. The apparition startled Anna, who was still lulled in her Christmas memories.

"Say, girls, I've just been to the movies——" Florence stopped short as she became aware of Anna, and recoiled a step. "Miss Spangle, how d'ye do!" she snapped in ill-hidden surprise.

"Miss Spangle is so kind and has come to pay us a call," said Mrs. Crane glibly. "Go and get yerself a chair out of the bedroom and sit down and have a chat with us."

"Oh no. I couldn't think of it——" and Florence waved her hand with a sweep. "I've got somebody waitin' for me downstairs. I just wanted to step up here and see if you wouldn't come along on a lark, Kate Stay-at-home! Come on—I'll land you a feller for to-day."

"No, thanks, I don't want none of your fellers," Kate

COLLEAGUES

replied bitterly, then added with a sly glance at her cousin's big hat with the red willow-plume: "Say—who gave you that hat?"

"That's tellin'!" smirked Florence and pirouetted with dash on the kitchen floor. Suddenly she paced up to Kate and slapped her heartily on the back. "Come on now, it'll do you a world of good to get out on the street. What have you been doin' with yourself all day?"

"Kate's been washing her clothes," Lucy answered for her sister. "That's more than you've been doing. Besides," she added severely, "Kate would rather listen to Miss Spangle than go on your larks with your beaux."

"Oh, is that so?" said Floss awkwardly, with a cold look at Anna. "Well, I won't bother you no more. I'm sorry for you, Kate. I always told you, why don't you go into the chorus? Good-bye!"

Florence whisked out as she had whirled in, and slammed the door.

"Go into the chorus, you bet!" snarled Kate, as she followed Florence with her sad, gray eyes. "Piecework at the factory ten hours a day and overtime is more respectable!"

"Cousin Floss is real coarse, ain't she, Miss Spangle?" said Lucy with a prim aloofness.

"Oh, she is not so bad," said Anna, thoughtfully. "I thought so, too, the other night, but perhaps she is not so bad after all."

During a minute of depressed silence, Anna watched Kate's mournful, gray eyes grow hard and cold like steel, and her thin lips quiver.

"Sometimes"—Kate's mind, smothered in silence, broke out in volcanic spasms—"sometimes—sometimes I

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

think I'll just go and do like what Floss does—sometimes I think I just won't stay home evenin's no longer, and I'll go to the movies and to the dance halls all night with fellers—and—and sometimes I think I'll paint and get hold of some of them downtown men and get money out of them like Floss does——”

“Oh, Kate, you wouldn't, you know you wouldn't!” cried Lucy, flushing with anger. “What will Miss Spangle think of you?”

“I don't care what she thinks of me,” said Kate. “Miss Spangle is rich and I'm poor. She don't know what it's like to sit in that stuffy room ten hours every dreary day till your back cracks for five dollars a week and have to pay for your thread. She don't know what it's like to have to stay overtime when your bones are achin'——”

“Oh, Kate, calm down!” Mrs. Crane interposed soothingly, and added in serene resignation, as she turned to Anna:

“Kate gets this way every once in a while; she can't help it; it's from workin' so hard.”

“It's Floss that gets her like that,” said Lucy. “Floss rubs her the wrong way.”

Floss! Anna watched the lid of the hot-water kettle dance on the stove to a purring tune, and, regardless of the three women about her, lapsed into meditation. Floss, spirit of the half-world! A vision flashed before Anna's inward eye, the vision of a chorus-girl with a saucy-eyed, defiant face beneath a jaunty, red willow plume, fantastically illumined by a street lantern, and in the background shadowy figures crowding round a limousine in front of a theater. The kettle purred on while the vision dissolved and a new vaporous picture took its

COLLEAGUES

place. Again Anna saw a motor-car, but this time in front of a great hotel. A haughty girl with challenging eyes and a dazzling skin that shone through a dense black veil was reaching out her hand to a dapper cavalier as she stepped on to the carpet laid for her velvet shoes.

"Twin visions," Anna meditated, "and what is their difference?"

"Oh, Mrs. Hamilton, chaperone!" a voice cried out of the labyrinth of her meditations. "Stout, immovable sentinel armed with brilliants on your ears and a lorgnette before your searching eyes, you stand guard between the half-world and the world!" And Anna's eyes fell on Mrs. Crane, the small, white woman, who sat brooding with her wrinkled hands folded in her lap.

"A penny for your thoughts, Miss Spangle!" cried Lucy, whereupon Anna answered reluctantly:

"I was thinking of your Cousin Floss, and other things!"

Then Anna remembered with a start that she had set out to call on the Cranes like an angelic visitor, and that she was now only thickening the cloud that had settled on the family.

"Do you want me to sing to you?" she asked, prompted by a sudden inspiration.

"Oh, yes, do, do!" cried all three.

So Anna sang "Auld Lang Syne" and "My Heart's in the Highlands" and "The Road to Mandalay" and other songs that she happened to remember. Lucy blushed with enthusiasm, Mrs. Crane nodded, serenely blissful, and even Kate's melancholy gray eyes seemed to light up in reconciliation with life.

Nevertheless, when Anna was back in her detested quarters and mused alone in her room, the hopeless,

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

reproachful eyes of Kate Crane were staring at her from every dark corner. In her dreams she saw them throughout the night, and she could not evade them during the following days.

One of these days was Christmas. Anna woke up early with the dull sense that she ought to be in a festive mood and could not. This morning seemed like any Wednesday or Saturday morning with a *matinée* and an evening performance ahead of her; only the drudgery that was accepted on other days like daily bread to-day was steeped in bitter loneliness. The aftertaste of Christmas Eve on the stage still made her spirits faint and, driven by a desperate restlessness, she longed to flee from her dingy cell out into the street, the home of the unknown.

At breakfast Anna found on her plate packages tied with pink ribbon from Miss Floyd and Miss Flanagan, and even an offering from Mr. Estrello, a hat-pin studded with false brilliants. With a sour smile Anna packed these tokens away, and left the house before it was time for the postman, who might possibly bring a sign of pity from home. Complete desolation was better than pale reminders of bygone cheer!

Outdoors the air was crisp, and frozen snow sparkled under foot; the sky was deep blue, and the shop windows festive with red and green. Loud, high-voiced bells were ringing. Never before had Anna felt so keenly the pulse-beat of the throng as it flooded up and down Broadway. Every passer-by—the little blue-lipped boy with a big azalia in his arm, the pale stenographer freezing in her thin kid gloves, the Italian workman with the sprig of holly in his buttonhole—every one she looked in the face, as if she would say: "Dear passer-by, you are

COLLEAGUES

my nearest kin to-day; let us wish each other a merry Christmas!" And while she was thus borne along on the tide of the street Anna thought that perhaps after all she was tasting a measure of happiness, for to be quite lonely was to be quite free.

The doors of a great church stood open, and Anna saw a multitude surging in. Why shouldn't she, too, go into the house that welcomed her to warmth and light and to the warm and sunny music of the organ? So Anna slipped into the corner of a back pew, and soon forgot, on the seraphic wings of jubilant carols, that she was not the most blessed in the congregation. "God rest ye, merry gentlemen, let nothing you dismay," was echoing in her ears when she stepped out again into the frosty air, and Anna laughed aloud from the joy of living in a festive throng.

She could have sauntered through the streets all day, especially through the side streets to look into the windows where green wreaths with red ribbons hung to cheer the homeless passer-by like Anna. But it was almost eleven o'clock, and she had promised to share the Cranes' Christmas dinner at twelve, before she and Lucy should have to hurry off to their odious *matinée* duty.

When Anna stopped at her hotel to take with her the Christmas packages for Lucy and Kate, she found in the hall a large box addressed in the writing of Aunt Sarah. Uncertain whether to be glad or disappointed at such a reproachful greeting, Anna unpacked a profusion of Christmas greens, sweets, nuts, and even a little Christmas tree with candles, all prepared with good Aunt Sarah's homespun care. On a little card was written in a shaky hand:

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

DEAR ANNA:

I couldn't bear to think of you all alone on Christmas day without any cheer. So I am sending you these little home-like things. Your father and I are missing you sadly.

Your worried and lonesome

AUNT SARAH.

From Anna's father there was nothing.

Unwilling either to cry or to laugh, Anna packed all the pleasant things back into the box and, though it was heavy, carried it to the home of the Cranes. There the little Christmas tree and all the festive accessories were hailed with glee, and Lucy danced about Anna, clapping her hands.

"You see," said Anna, "you are the only friends I have."

After the simple Christmas dinner, prepared with tenderness by Mrs. Crane's expert hands, Kate lit the small tree on the kitchen table in mute solemnity.

"Ain't it beautiful!" she cried, while the sad light left her wistful, gray eyes. "We've never had a tree before. Oh, I just wish I could sit an' look at a tree with candles all day instead of goin' to that awful place. I wish Christmas was all year round."

"I hate my work now," said Anna seriously, "but I never knew any one who hated her work as much as you do yours."

"Oh, it ain't the work I mind," Kate replied. "It's the place, and the noise, and the air, and the hours, and the backache."

"Isn't there any way to change it?" asked Anna, fascinated by the feverish gleam of hostility that kindled in Kate's eyes when the topic of her grief was touched. "Is there no help?"

COLLEAGUES

"There ain't no help," said Kate, in dull resignation. "Now, there's Anna Kovalsky at the shop, who's been tryin' to get me to the meetin's at her uncle's house. She's crazy about that John Bruce, the labor leader, you know—he's goin' to save the workin' people, she says. But I'm too dead tired nights to go to the meetin's an' hear how workin' folks is goin' to be saved. I'll wait till he saves me!"

"John Bruce—John Bruce!" Anna repeated slowly. Where had she heard that name before? Was it not the thought of John Bruce, the fanatic labor leader, that had clouded her father's brow in Berlin when he was thinking of his factories and the strikes that John Bruce had incited in the neighboring paper mills? And by this dangerous John Bruce the friends of Kate were hoping to be saved!

"Oh, don't talk about them things," Mrs. Crane broke into her meditations. "This is Christmas Day, an' I'm not goin' to have no talk of business. I'm goin' to look at the candles, an' make believe I'm back in the old countree."

"Can't you sing 'Come Back to Erin' for mother?" said Lucy, laughing. "She hasn't seen the old countree since she was twelve, but she's still homesick for it."

But Anna was severely sober.

"I should like to do more for you than sing," she said solemnly, and trembled at a thought that was coming upon her with violent speed.

"What are you thinking of? You look so queer!" cried Lucy, alarmed.

"I am thinking of something—something vague," said Anna, in a revery. "And I'll tell you what it is some time."

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"Oh, what is it?" Lucy exclaimed. "Tell us!"

"It's something I should like to do," said Anna mysteriously. "But I can't tell you now——"

"Oh, do!" Lucy pleaded.

"Say, Lucy," Mrs. Crane intervened, "it's most time for you to be gettin' to work."

"Oh, horror!" cried Anna. "I forgot the Christmas matinée!"

Off Anna hurried with Lucy and left the little, white woman and the wistful-eyed Kate tenderly watching the candles on the small Christmas tree burn low and fill the kitchen with the festive scent of wax mingled with burnt pine.

And Anna played in the Christmas matinée to a moderate audience and in the evening to a smaller one, but she did not care. The picture of the Cranes' kitchen never left her mind all the afternoon and evening, and Kate's yearning eyes as they watched the Christmas candles haunted Anna with a rare persistence. At night, as she was riding home through the bright holiday streets, the exuberance that had vibrated through her soul in the morning when she had floated on the tide of the throng, now once more throbbed in her till she stretched out her arms as if she would embrace the multitude. And when, in the peace of her room, she opened the window to let in the crystalline notes of the chimes, for the first time her vague reveries and desires hardened into a real thought. She wanted to help the laborers who, like Kate, were poor and oppressed. The poor! How could she till now have closed her eyes to the grimacing face of poverty! Was poverty not lodged with her now, under the same roof? Was it not surging beneath her window on the wave of the crowd? Was it

COLLEAGUES

not visiting, a meager holiday guest, her unknown neighbors and her new friends? And it seemed to Anna that on Christmas no thought could be more beautiful and apt than that of helping the poor.

Just how this lofty thought should harden into fruitful deeds Anna could not tell, but during the week after Christmas her new resolve was uppermost in her mind. There was nothing now that bound her desires to the Estrello Company, and the call of the oppressed was loud and compelling.

The next Sunday at the Cranes' she could no longer keep silent about her ardent wish:

"I should like to do something for Kate," Anna declared, "for Kate and all the others."

"What others?" asked Lucy.

"For all that have to work so hard in factories," answered Anna.

But Kate smiled bitterly, as the doubter smiles at the dreamer, and shook her head.

"How are you goin' to help?" she said wearily. "You've never done the work; you couldn't stand it for a day."

Anna was piqued.

"I could stand it," she cried out in a challenge. "And I shall stand it. I'll show you that I can!"

"How are you goin' to do that?" said Kate, still dully.

Then Anna had an inspiration:

"I am going to enter your factory as an unskilled worker and study the work and the life from the inside. Then I shall know how it should be bettered. It seems vague now—this high-minded plan of changing the state of affairs—and no doubt you think it fantastic, Kate.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

But after I've worked with you a month I'll know what I am at, and I am going to do something, if only to write glaring pamphlets and influence public opinion!"

"But, Miss Spangle!" cried Lucy, in dismay, "you're on the stage. Have you forgotten?"

Anna tossed back her head and laughed triumphantly.

"I am going to break with the stage," she announced.

"I think the stage can spare me, but this——"

"Oh, no, don't!" cried Lucy, while her eyes were glistering with tears. "How lonely I'll be without you!"

"Oh, you'll see me very often," Anna assured her. "I'll move into one of these streets and live near you, and while you're in New York you can see me every night."

"But Mr. Estrello—your contract——" Lucy's eyes were wide open in wonder.

"I'll hand in my resignation to-morrow," Anna boasted, and flushed with joy at the prospect, "and two weeks from to-morrow I have a right to quit the Estrello Melodrama Company forever."

For a moment Lucy was speechless.

"How queer, how queer that is!" she muttered to herself. "The idea of giving up the stage for factory work! Why, I'd almost rather go into the chorus like Floss than——"

"Than into the garment trade like Kate," her sister finished, with a snap.

But the next morning Anna woke up, as if to the flourish of trumpets, with an adventurous joy in battle. She reread her contract before breakfast and waited eagerly in the hall for the manager, who was a late riser, to come down. She let her eyes linger on every tawdry picture and poster in sight, on every dingy corner of the

COLLEAGUES

hall with the sweet sense of "never again!" And when Mr. Estrello came down at last with his grin and his commonplace brown eyes, Anna reveled in parting joy. In the depth of her heart she was wondering at her own indifference: when she had left the hospital, at least a shadow of regret at leaving the angelic Agnes Leighton and the jovial Dora had flitted across her challenging spirit—not to forget the unwilling separation from Benvenuto. Benvenuto! While Mr. Estrello was still placidly walking downstairs, a vision of Benvenuto, child-eyed, wondering, wounded, tarnished the martial armor of Anna's spirit, so that she had to shut her inward eye forcibly lest her triumph be weakened by remorse.

Mr. Estrello received Anna's announcement like a lash across the face with a whip. He turned whiter than his natural pallor, his dull, brown eyes flashed a fierce fire and his teeth were clenched like the fangs of a bulldog.

"I can't have it!" he snarled. "We were just going on the road."

"Miss Crane can take my part," said Anna, by a sudden inspiration.

"Miss Crane is a kid," returned the manager, enraged. "I call that downright squealing. The play's been going rottenly enough these last weeks, and I've set all my hopes on the West—then you go and leave me in the lurch."

"If the play has been going so rottenly," said Anna, with a haughty accent, "while I've played the leading part, perhaps it will go better when somebody else takes it."

Mr. Estrello changed his tactics.

"Well, now, look here, Miss Spangle," he coaxed, "you know very well there isn't a woman in the company

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

that can hold a candle to you. If you leave me now, you'll be my ruin."

Anna looked at Mr. Estrello as if he were an earth-worm wriggling under her foot.

"I have made up my mind," she said coldly, "and I am firm."

"I suppose you are going back to Boston," the defeated manager said, with a bitterness that was not lost on Anna, "and you are going to quit work and have a good time."

"No," Anna replied, with a keen, exquisite relish of the situation. "I am not going back to Boston to have a good time. I am going to stay in New York and work in a factory."

CHAPTER IX

JOHN BRUCE

THE forewoman of the Regal Waist Company looked at Anna with suspicion, as if it were not quite clear to her why this specific human being—although she wore a plain gray suit and shabby black hat and was accompanied by Kate Crane, a veteran worker in the factory—should seek employment as a beginner in button-hole stitching. As the season after Christmas was dull and no harm was done, therefore, in leaving the machines to beginners, she had been willing to engage this Anna Borden, who had looked round so haughtily and given such pert replies, but there was probably some mystery about her. These were the thoughts that Anna read on the tense forehead and the sharp, beady eyes of the forewoman, as she and Kate followed her to the machine that was to be the throbbing content of her day. The machine in question was a single-needle construction, as Kate, the experienced worker, told her, and was driven by power at the touch of a treadle. Long rows of similar machines filled the long, narrow and gloomy room that had a gray and chilly view of another dreary factory building through the closed windows. A bulb of electric light swung over each machine, that illumined the one important object round which the life of the shop centered—the needle. With intense concentration Anna watched Kate, as she set her foot on a treadle and

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

started an electric buzzing of the machine, then with firm hands held the two pieces of cloth that were to be sewed together under the swiftly running needle.

"I can do that, too!" said Anna to herself courageously, and yet this simple task appeared harder than acting a tragic scene.

When she had pressed the treadle and was guiding the cloth with shaking hands steadied by a desperate resolve, the machine with its jarring buzz and the flashing needle seemed a roaring beast with a sharp tongue pointed at her hands. But the pieces were sewed together!

"You'll get on to it!" said the forewoman, and walked away.

"You'll be quick to learn!" said Kate.

Anna was astonished at their tone of encouragement, for she had supposed that the seam was perfect.

"The seam ain't straight!" Kate explained, and Anna made another demonstration.

Anna tried again and again, and the seams gradually came nearer perfection.

"I guess you've got the idea," said Kate finally. "I've got to leave you. I work over there by that window in the corner. I'll see you at lunch-time."

Kate spoke in a monotonous, whining voice, so that every word she said had the sound of a complaint. The girls to Anna's right and left were bending over their machines and feeding the ravenous, inanimate creatures with cloth snatched by quick, deft hands. The whole room was buzzing. When Anna stopped to look about and to watch Kate take her seat by the window, she felt as if she were an idler out of place in this racing-course. Suddenly Anna remembered that she had come into this

JOHN BRUCE

buzzing place as an enlightened messenger to understand, to commiserate, to better—what? There was no joy, no beauty here, to be sure—only noise, close air, rags of cloth strewn about the place, diligent women bending over machines. But what was there for her to do, except to follow the others and try, by devoting herself to the pieces of cloth entrusted to her hands, to hold her position and earn her weekly wage. The horror and the limitation of this outlook made her shudder, and she felt like a prisoner who had pleaded guilty and welcomed his own chains. The glance of one of the working girls met her eyes—a curious, sarcastic glance that seemed to say: “Can you afford to be staring into the air?” Thereupon Anna fixed her eyes on her machine and worked and worked as if the forewoman were standing behind her with a whip.

When a sudden cease of the buzzing and a murmur of voices announced the recess for lunch, Anna rose with a sigh of relief. Her shoulder ached from the unaccustomed work and the hum of the machine was still in her ears. Kate stood at her side.

“Where is the lunch-room?” asked Anna.

“Oh, you needn’t think we’ve got a swell dinin’-room!” answered Kate sharply. “It’s right here we have our lunch.”

So Anna went to the hook on the wall of the work-room where she had hung her coat, took down her square brown lunch-box, such as she had seen laborers carry on the street, and opened it in front of her machine, where Kate drew up a chair to join her. The girls round about them ate sullenly with fitful flashes of conversation.

“Tired?” asked Kate, and Anna, unwilling to admit

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

the truth, shook her head, although the pain in her shoulder made her restless.

"I am," said Kate dully. "I've been dead tired all the last week."

"Say, Kate Crane," one of the neighboring girls began. "I spent a dollar last week on thread, an' if I've got to waste that much on the company's thread again—I'm goin' to strike."

"Are you now?" Kate replied. "And who's goin' to feed you?"

"It ain't fair," the girl went on passionately. "They sell the goods sewed with the thread we buy, an' they take the profits."

The melancholy brown eyes of the Polish girl were staring beyond Anna, as if they were beholding far away a vision of revenge.

"It's enough to make you sick the way they grind the life out of you in rush time, and when the slack times come, to make you hang round here with nothin' to do. I sat here with my hands folded in my lap yesterday from half past three till five o'clock, honest, an' my mother was ironin' at home, an' would have given anythin' to have me there."

"Why don't you all strike?" asked Anna, through an impulse of curiosity, but when she had said it she felt the blood rush to her cheeks. How could she, a raw beginner, propose such a weighty and rebellious act? Her punishment followed in an instant. With one mocking outburst the girls round her laughed aloud, whereupon Anna cursed within her humbled soul her whole lofty undertaking.

"Don't laugh, she don't know no better!" said a voice of authority from behind Anna, and, as she turned round,

JOHN BRUCE

gleaming black eyes met her glance and a stately, heroic-faced girl came toward her.

"This is a non-union shop," she explained to Anna, "so we can't strike when we want to, because there isn't any union to back us."

"Oh!" said Anna meekly, then remembered suddenly how Kate had told her once that this shop was not unionized. Indeed, she had asked a very silly question on her first day! But there was something in the tone of the black-eyed girl that made her wonder what place she held among her fellow-workers.

"Say, Anna——" said a little, freckled, red-haired wisp wearily. "I ain't goin' to your meetin' to-night. I'm too dead tired. I'm goin' to the movies, if I can scrape up a dime."

Anna stared at the frail speaker, mystified, but the black-eyed, majestic girl replied in her stead: "That's a shame; I was hoping for a good crowd!"

"We are namesakes!" said Anna. "I am Anna, too—Anna Borden."

"Oh, then let's be friends! My name is Anna Kovalsky," the benevolent beauty introduced herself. "I'm a Pole; where do you come from?"

"From Boston," said Anna.

"You're so dark; I thought you was one of us," her namesake returned; whereupon Anna smiled aimlessly and wondered, as she ate her sandwich, if this other Anna would really become a friend——

A shrill whistle blew; the girls packed away their lunch-boxes nervously and rushed back to work. Again the room was buzzing like a giant bumble-bee, and Anna was bending over her machine, while the growing pain in her shoulder made her long for the whistle at five

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

o'clock. When the welcome sound pierced Anna's ears she jumped up from her stool, as if suddenly relieved from torture. She glanced at the pile of sewed pieces that her neighbor was counting, then at her own scanty heap: but she did not care, as long as the dreary toil was over, and she could go out of the dense, dingy room into the clear frosty air!

"Do you think you can stand it?" asked Kate, on their way home.

"I must," Anna replied.

"Must!" Kate laughed bitterly. "You can be thankful you don't 'must' nothin'!"

"But I do," Anna insisted. "If I don't carry this through I shall be a failure."

"I wouldn't mind bein' a failure," said Kate, with her dreary smile, "if I had enough to eat with it."

The rest of the way they walked and rode in silence.

Anna's new home was a tenement in the block where the Cranes lived, a flight of two little rooms and a kitchen, which Anna had furnished herself with cheap tables and chairs, and an unpainted iron bed. Beside the bed stood her trunk where the wardrobe of Lily Spangle lay buried, and from hooks on the wall hung the checkered calico house dresses of the new Anna Borden, the factory-worker. These surroundings had thrilled Anna this morning, before she left for her new work, by their austerity, but now that she came home after the dull work, starved for ease and light and pleasant food for the eyes, she wished that she had not carried out her new severe life plan with such nicety of detail.

"Nettie!" she called into the tenement across the hall, where the door stood open. Nettie was the one luxury that Anna could not resist, a little girl of fourteen whom

JOHN BRUCE

she had hired to do the housework and help to cook. The cooking that Anna had learned at the hospital she practiced once more, but left the disagreeable and the tiresome part of the work to the shy and willing Nettie.

"I'm too tired to cook my supper to-night!" she said to the child, who slipped timidly into the kitchen. "Make anything you like!"

Then Anna threw herself on the hard bed and stared at the intricate design on the wall paper of brown dragons entangled in fluttering brown ribbons, and she wondered whether the hideous conventionalized pattern was really an exciting maze for the eye or nothing but dull brown monotony. Then she wondered, as she lay there wearily, whether her own life at this point were really exciting and complex with its new task and colleagues, or merely brown and monotonous. There was nothing to do, however, but to go on and wait.

It was hard to get up at six o'clock in the cold, dark morning, and start the fire in the stove till Nettie, the child, came in, rubbing her eyes. It was hard to set out again with the brown lunch-box for a day of continuous toil. But Anna was not the only bearer of a brown lunch-box on the gray streets in the early morning, and the sense that she was one of the toiling multitude buoyed up her waning courage, so that when she found herself once more at her place in the work-room, she felt steeled to battle all day with the machine.

To Anna's surprise, the work grew easier from day to day, and the long hours less of a strain. But as the strain lessened, the dullness of the work seemed to grow and the days, one by one, were dragging on toward a blank. At lunch-time, Kate and Jean and Marie would sigh and complain how tired they were, and how they

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

wished they were at home; and Julie and Lizzy would boast of the callers they had the night before and of joy-rides and flashing nights at the "movies," with little effect on their listeners, for every one knew, as Anna had heard from Kate, that Julie and Lizzy were the most forlorn of all, who lived in a hole of a room in a squalid lodging-house, where a caller could hardly turn round. The sullen Lottie still muttered revenge for the thread she had to buy, and sometimes, when the hours had been long the night before, or the wages scant at the end of the week, a chorus joined her, angry, yet subdued, like distant thunder.

What would it all lead to, Anna kept asking herself, and why was she here at all? She had come to help, but she saw clearly now that there was no help to give. To be sure, she had sent Julie and Lizzy warm knitted vests in an anonymous package for which they were to thank their mysterious callers—but she had not come here to dole out petty gifts!

"I wonder sometimes," Anna Kovalsky, the beautiful Polish girl who had impressed Anna on the day of her arrival, said solemnly one evening while they were walking down the long steep stairs, "I wonder why you have come here to work with us. Kate Crane told me you was rich and had a beautiful home by the sea, and you have been on the stage, and left it to work in this place. That makes me wonder!"

Anna Kovalsky spoke in a singing, rhythmic tone and her voice was low and rich like a violincello. Among all the dull, cowed working-girls Anna's hungry imagination clung to this queenly Anna Kovalsky, in whose deep black eyes she read something of the wistfulness of Chopin's music.

JOHN BRUCE

"I came here," Anna said frankly, "because I wanted to help all this dreariness. But I see I have no power at all. I am helpless, like all the rest."

Anna Kovalsky looked at Anna with a tense, significant glance.

"You can't help alone," she said in a solemn voice. "You can't help alone any more than you can change the world alone. Can you give the poor more bread and can you make the rich humble? What can you do? You can't even tell these weak girls to look out for their own good. They're too tired, and they don't care."

"Perhaps I ought to have gone into a union shop," said Anna ruefully.

"They wouldn't take you," her companion answered firmly. "They don't allow beginners. It's the poor, unskilled workers that need help most, and they're not in the unions."

In silence Anna trudged beside her stately teacher, and a foreign sense of impotence bowed her down.

"Come to my uncle's to-night," the Polish girl suddenly broke the silence, "at 755 Lexington Avenue. Come any time after eight, and he'll tell you everything—and perhaps," she added, with an inspired lightning flash in her eye, "perhaps you'll see John Bruce."

Then Anna Kovalsky said good-bye, and whisked round the street corner. Anna stood rooted to the pavement, staring at the spot whence the Polish girl had vanished like a prophetess in a vision. John Bruce again—the savior of the working people! She would really see and hear John Bruce, the feared and the adored! Anna was grateful—grateful for a night that she could look forward to with suspense. For she would go to Anna Kovalsky's uncle. Of course, she would go!

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

Three hours later Anna was standing breathless at the head of a steep flight of stairs and knocking at the door labeled on a piece of paper: "Ignatz Kovalsky." Anna's heart beat as it had throbbed when she had first called on Mr. Estrello in the Hotel Welcome of Providence, and to-day she felt, besides, the complete mystery of her adventure. What if Ignatz Kovalsky should prove to be a commonplace illiterate old Pole! But why, then——

The door was opened by a middle-aged man with shaggy eyebrows and a long curly brown beard.

"Good evening!" he said to Anna, in a kind voice without a tinge of surprise. "Sit right down over there. Mr. Bruce will be here soon."

Mr. Bruce again! Anna was tuned to the highest key of suspense. In the small, garret-like room, with its inclined ceiling and unpainted wooden walls, several people were sitting round a large table on which a kerosene lamp was burning dimly. As Anna approached them, Anna Kovalsky rose with a spontaneous cry of welcome.

"Anna Borden—good for you! I was hoping you'd come. I've told my aunt and uncle about you!"

Then Anna was presented to Mrs. Olga Kovalsky, the girl's aunt, a dark, stout, sharp-eyed woman, who was distributing leaflets to the company round the table.

"Have you seen the *Brotherhood* before?" she asked Anna intently, and handed her a large newspaper which bore that name.

"Uncle is the editor of that paper," Anna Kovalsky explained. "You must take it—and take some of these leaflets, too. Then you'll find out all about our organization, the Toilers' Brotherhood!"

JOHN BRUCE

"You must become a member!" said the bearded man who had opened the door. "My niece Annie tells me you want to help the poor laborers. Well, I tell you there is only one way to help them—down with capital!"

Ignatz Kovalsky banged his fist on the table, so that the kerosene lamp trembled.

"Anna Borden said, Uncle Ignatz," Anna Kovalsky spoke eagerly, "she said, perhaps she ought to have gone into a union shop. I told her why that would do no good—but you tell her again, so that she'll understand!"

Anna felt delirious, there in the small, dim room with eager people to the right and left, ready to shower information upon her. It seemed as if she were among conspirators or prophets, but, whatever they might be, at least she was once more keenly alive!

"Don't join any union!" declared Ignatz Kovalsky. His tone was excited and commanding, but at the same time his words seemed to flow mechanically, as if he had recited them every night of his life. "Don't join any union, I say! Join the Toilers' Brotherhood! The Toilers' Brotherhood is one big union for all workers, skilled or unskilled, not a small craft union for the skilled. The craft unionists have no power to strike; if you're going on a strike with one craft union, along come the scabs from another craft and take your places. And if the strikers in another union will beg you to strike with them, the officers of your union will come and remind you of 'the sacred cow'—that's what we call the contract with the employer. The Toilers' Brotherhood don't recognize no contract with the employer! The Toilers' Brotherhood recognizes that capital is the enemy of labor, and the fight for labor can be won only if all the toilers unite against the enemy! Oh, you'll hear

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

John Bruce to-night!" Ignatz finished his speech abruptly. "If nobody else can win you over, he will!"

John Bruce again! Before Anna's confused sense a vision rose of a great, massive body of men shouting—shouting furiously at an unseen enemy beyond; and gradually this body of men took on the form of one man only, a great, massive man with clenched fists and flaming eyes, who stood alone and shouted. And in her excitement and confusion she named this vision: John Bruce!

"Come and sit with me!" said Anna Kovalsky kindly, and drew her by the hand to a seat a little behind the table, from where Anna could watch the company. They were mostly men, about a dozen in all, Poles and Russians and Italians, as far as Anna could judge, some standing in lively, gesticulating talk, some brooding over the leaflets on the table. An old man with a long, white beard was muttering to himself as he read, a young fiery Italian in a tattered coat was giving a demonstration of a fight, and a pale, young woman beside him was singing her baby to sleep. Some of the men were smoking pipes, so that the room was soon filled with a numbing smoke. Anna sat speechless beside her Polish namesake, wondering and waiting for John Bruce.

He came. The young Italian stopped short in his brandishing gesture, the old Pole ceased to mutter, and a stir of instant attention swept over the whole company. By a sudden impulse Anna jumped to her feet, and her heart beat with a rare violence. John Bruce was her vision in flesh and blood!

He came into the room like a master, yet without a swagger. His great massive presence enforced silence, his square vigorous determined face, beneath thick gray

JOHN BRUCE

hair—hair prematurely gray, for the face was young—commanded awe. As well as Anna could see through the smoke in the room, she discerned that his eyes, under heavy brows, were very dark blue, so dark that they almost seemed black, and they darted forth a fierce gleam, like sunlight on a sword.

"He's a Scotchman," whispered Anna Kovalsky, and to Anna it seemed that John Bruce might well have been the heroic leader of a Highland clan. All held their breaths till Ignatz Kovalsky seized the newcomer's hand and cried:

"Welcome, welcome back, John Bruce. You're the man we need—we've been waiting for you!"

"Comrades!" spoke John Bruce, in a deep, masterful voice. "I have kept you waiting because they needed me over there—over there in Waterborough, where twenty thousand textile workers are now on strike. They needed a head to unite them—the Poles, the Italians, the Lithuanians, the Belgians, the Greeks, the Syrians—they needed me, and they need you, every one of you, to strengthen the Toilers' Brotherhood. Twenty thousand men and women are willing to quit work in spite of hungry mouths to feed: they are striking for shorter hours and more pay. But is that all? It is not to win this one strike that I am willing to stand by my brother-workers and, if need be, to shed for them my last drop of blood. It is to win a battle in the great war against the oppressor. Are you free citizens in this glorious land of liberty? I say you are no more than slaves, for the employer that owns your tools, your house, the factory where you want to work—that powerful man owns the bread that you and your children eat and, therefore, owns your body, your mind, your heart, and your soul.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

Therefore, the fight that the Toilers' Brotherhood is waging——"

John Bruce spoke on, but Anna was in a fever, and the voices clamoring within her distracted her inward ear. But her eyes still hung on the lips of the orator, as if she were waiting for a prophecy of her own life. And it was so. Anna knew, in her delirium, that her life would pass from now on along the footsteps of this master. She had set out to help the poor, and he was pointing out the way—not the winding path on which philanthropists hopped timidly from stepping-stone to stepping-stone, but the broad army road of the Toilers' Brotherhood.

An abrupt silence—John Bruce had ended his speech! There followed an outburst of clapping and stamping from the little band in the smoky room, then a murmur of voices.

"Do you want to speak with him?" Anna heard Anna Kovalsky say at her side.

Anna's heart beat savagely.

"No," she whispered. "I am afraid. But," she added eagerly—for her whole life up to this point seemed to reel past her in quick, successive visions—"it is for the first time in my life."

"You needn't be afraid of him," said the Polish girl, in a soothing tone. "He can get mighty fierce, but, Aunt Olga says, he has a good heart."

Anna did not heed the questions that the men asked John Bruce, but she listened greedily to every syllable of his answers. Anna began to wish that she had a question to ask, so that she might have an answer from him, but she knew nothing of the strike in Waterborough except from headlines in the morning paper, and the

JOHN BRUCE

convincing war-cry of the Toilers' Brotherhood she had heard to-night for the first time.

"Everything for the first time!" Anna said to herself, and wondered if she were living to-night for the first time.

The members of the little assembly were pulling money out of their pockets, some scraping together single nickels and pennies.

"Pass round the plate!" Olga Kovalsky said to her niece, with a nudge of her elbow, and held out an old tin plate.

"I'll do it!" said Anna, prompted by a mysterious force that swayed her will.

She snatched the plate, walked from one dark-eyed man to another, and her heart leaped at each tinkle of a coin on the tin. Then she went to the few women, and when even the mother of the sleeping baby, who had carried her infant home and returned, had dropped a handful of pennies, Anna opened her own purse and emptied all it contained without heeding the sum. Then she walked up to John Bruce and, with trembling hand, gave the plate to the master. He pierced Anna with his keen, dark blue eyes as if he were reading all her past like a flimsy tale and measuring the extent of her strength. Anna's glance met his and she was aware, with trembling, that hers was a beseeching glance—for the first time in her life!

"Thank you," said John Bruce, and Anna watched him count the contents of the plate, hoping that he would be satisfied.

"That's a good sum for such a small company!" said the master, to Anna's joy. "I am glad we have some loyal brothers here. But, remember, it's not money alone

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

we want. Stand by us through thick and thin; don't allow scabs; don't side with the oppressor; swell the number of the Toilers' Brotherhood. Is there any one here who has not joined?"

"I!" cried Anna, and stepped forward. Again the stern glance of John Bruce penetrated her, as if he were testing her worthiness. She signed the paper that he gave her with an unsteady hand, and when she looked up again she felt transformed, for she had pledged her soul to a cause.

As she rode home with Anna Kovalsky, who lived near her, and one of the Polish men, Anna's thoughts were fixed on the new cause, and to her the new cause was one with John Bruce.

"Thank you a thousand times!" she said to Anna Kovalsky, as she left her companions at a street corner.

"For what?" asked the Polish girl, surprised at Anna's ardor.

"For—for the new cause!" Anna stammered.

"I believe you're going to be one of our leaders," Anna Kovalsky laughed. "You must come to my uncle's again; he knows the best, noblest men! Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" Anna responded, as in a dream, and, while her feet were carrying her instinctively to her tenement, she was still in the smoky den of Ignatz Kovalsky, greedy for every masterful word from John Bruce. Anna could not sleep that night. Pictures kept her throbbingly awake, pictures of herself addressing a throng on the street beside John Bruce, the leader, of great mass meetings in crowded halls where John Bruce swayed a passionate audience, and she herself was somewhere near him on the platform! Now and then she would start with a shiver and remember that before this

JOHN BRUCE

evening she had not only never heard of the Toilers' Brotherhood, but had not laid eyes on John Bruce. Oh, the horror of going back to useless drudgery early the next morning when there was a cause to live for—a cause!

After a light, broken sleep in the early morning hours, Anna rose reluctantly, and, at the usual time, she started out for the dreary workshop. Fortunately, her work was mechanical enough, so that the drifting state of her thoughts wrought no great harm, although she turned out much fewer pieces than the day before. When the lunch-hour came, Anna could not refrain from telling Kate something about her absorbing night at the Kovalskys. But Kate merely shrugged her shoulders and smiled drearily. Poor Kate! Her soul was too much dulled by monotony to receive the thrills of her fellow-toilers! So Anna turned to Anna Kovalsky and could not question her enough, in a low voice, while the other girls were wondering what these two were gossiping, about the strike in Waterborough, the Brotherhood and John Bruce. She learned from her comrade that Bruce was preparing for a great mass meeting on Saturday night to win support and sympathy for the strikers, and that he would have to go back to Waterborough because the strikers were helpless without their leader.

"I'm going to my uncle's every night this week to see what's doing," said the enthusiastic young Pole. "My uncle is the editor of the *Brotherhood*, you know, and he always knows what's up. Why don't you come, too? John Bruce is likely to drop in any minute, and if you're so wild to help, he can tell you what to do."

Anna determined without hesitation to go to Ignatz Kovalsky's every night of the week. At eight o'clock,

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

when the dull work-day was over and she had dismissed Nettie from her tenement, she started out again for the alluring den on Lexington Avenue.

"Ah, Miss Borden, welcome here!" Ignatz greeted her. "What can I do for you?"

"I have come to ask what I can do for you," said Anna, and at her words the Pole's furrowed dark face was illumined.

"Well, well," he said, rubbing his hands. "We've got a new worker! Now, that's fine!"

His niece, whom Anna had met on the doorsteps, spoke eagerly: "Uncle, Miss Borden has had lots of education; she isn't like one of us."

"What do you mean?" her uncle interrupted, a little gruffly. "I thought she was one of us—didn't she join the Brotherhood last night?"

"Of course she joined last night," his wife explained in a tone of authority with a flash of her beady eyes. "But Annie means she's had more education than us folks. She used to be rich, and had more time to learn than us, when we've got to work!"

"You used to be rich——" A shadow of disappointment flitted over the face of Ignatz. All at once Anna realized that she—the newest member of the most revolutionary body in the country—was the child of a manufacturer, in fact, was living on the profits of his business. Her gilded past—an asset in the eyes of Mr. Estrello and the humble Cranes—was a blemish here among her revolutionary comrades! Evidently Kate had told the Polish girl something about Anna's past, for she herself, in her ardent talks with Anna Kovalsky, had been too absorbed in the future to keep the past in mind.

"You don't care what I used to be," cried Anna des-

JOHN BRUCE

perately, in her embarrassment. "What does it matter? I believe in your creed, and I am willing to work for you. Isn't that enough?"

"It's enough if you won't go back on us," said Ignatz, with a tinge of doubt in his rough voice that made Anna's spirits a little faint.

"Can you write good English?" Ignatz asked abruptly, after a minute's silence.

Anna's spirits rose again.

"Yes!" she cried. "I can."

"You can write up some of our news and, if you do that well, I'll let you put in some stories of your own."

Anna clapped her hands, and once more the prospect of a new work thrilled her with gladness.

"It isn't so easy!" warned Anna Kovalsky. "You'll have to do all your writing at night, and you'll be tired after the day's work."

"I'll give up my day's work," said Anna.

"What'll you live on?" cried Anna Kovalsky, alarmed. Anna was silent: it seemed that Kate had not given a quite accurate account of her affairs to the Polish girl, and it was better that Anna Kovalsky should believe her poor.

"She'll get paid by the Brotherhood, like all on the staff," said Ignatz, to Anna's relief. "We needed somebody to step in when Ivanowitch went to Chicago."

"Well, well, you can quit work in the shop!" the Polish girl exclaimed wistfully.

In that moment Anna resolved that she must do something heroic in regard to her fortune, but just what she did not dare to decide.

Besides, she could not think any longer now, because John Bruce was coming in at the door.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"They're going to send the militia to Waterborough!" were his first words.

"The curs!" grumbled Kovalsky.

"I just wanted to tell you that," said John. "I can't stop to-night. I've got to catch the late train to Waterborough," and it seemed to Anna—though she was not quite sure—that he was unwilling to go. "I'll be here to-morrow night, though," he said. And that was all.

When Anna was back in her lonely home, brooding in front of the smoldering kitchen fire, she poked the coal nervously, for she was impatient. These last two nights had brought her a new life work, had freed her from drudgery in the workshop, had blessed her with powerful companions, such as she had never known before, and still she was impatient. She wondered how long John Bruce would stay the next night—

If he knew that she was living on the capital that he condemned! If he knew how she had lived in her father's house! Her eyes fell on a ring with diamonds and rubies—her mother's ring—that she had not taken off since her mother's death, and had worn even in the factory with the jewels turned inside. If John Bruce should see that ring when he came from Waterborough to give her a list of starving strikers! She would confess to him—she would tell him everything—she would ask him what to do! But—Anna shivered—she was afraid!

She was not afraid, however, of the forewoman in the factory the next morning, when she told her flatly that she had decided to quit work. The woman looked at her as if Anna were insane, while she told her that she couldn't get better pay anywhere else; and Anna found a long-lost, wicked pleasure in laughing into her face. It was not so simple, however, with Kate Crane.

JOHN BRUCE

"You've got caught by them Polacks, till you don't know what you're doin'!" the poor, dull girl protested. "What'll Lucy say: she thought you was so smart! I didn't see no sense in your goin' into this kind of shop-work, anyway—but now!"

"You'll understand some day," said Anna, sphinx-like.

"Mother was askin'," said Kate, after a pause, "if you wouldn't come round this evenin'. She hasn't seen you for so long, and you used to come round all the time."

"I'm sorry," said Anna blandly, "but you see this new work of mine is going to keep me busy in the evenings, too——"

"Then you'll drop your old friends," Kate mourned.

"No, not at all!" Anna protested. "But my first duty is with my work."

The sound of her own words seemed to mock Anna. Duty—work, indeed! This new undertaking to which she was pledged appeared to her neither like a duty nor like a work, but rather like a mighty irresistible force that compelled her whither it would into a battlefield of hate or a Paradise of love.

"Give my love to Lucy when you write," said Anna to the disappointed Kate. "To think of her still with Estrello!"

Indeed, when Anna now thought of her months with the Estrello Melodrama Company, they seemed to her like tinsel that she had torn off in disgust and thrown into the gutter.

Anna left Kate to work on in the factory that she herself needed never to see again, and walked home in the sharp cold air, free once more—free, and yet in chains more binding than any she had felt before, for she knew that she had a master!

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

Yet, after all, John Bruce had not commanded her to join the Brotherhood: she had signed the pledge of her own free will! It was all so puzzling—

Wrapped in these thoughts, Anna reached her tenement. She started when she saw a note on the door-knob, for the postman always slipped the letters under the door. Was she needed at the Kovalskys for urgent duty? She snatched the note, tore it open, and read:

DEAR ANNA:

I inquired everywhere to find out your address, and no one could give it to me. At last I ventured to ask your aunt, and was so glad that she knew. Since the first of January I have been taking charge of a department in a new Home for Destitute Children that my father has started. I hope you will come to see me there any morning from 9 to 1 o'clock.

Your faithful friend,

RUTH GREGORY.

Ruth here—at this time! Anna walked to her kitchen window and looked out over the gray roofs. Why this distraction? At any other time she would have welcomed her childhood friend with open arms—but now! John Bruce—no, the Brotherhood—no, after all, John Bruce, as the soul of the Brotherhood—allowed no lesser lights to flicker in her heart. Now that she was determined to burn her ships behind her and step into the Brotherhood like any poor sister, she did not want to talk of old times and think of her home. But, since she did not want to hurt Ruth as she had just wounded Kate, she decided to call on her old friend immediately, before she would be immersed in the whirlpool of the Brotherhood that was already sucking her powerfully into its depth.

JOHN BRUCE

Without difficulty Anna found the new Home for Destitute Children, a stately brick building on the Bowery, a very island of solid respectability in its squalid surroundings. The maid that opened the door, the odor of fresh paint, the immaculate floor and walls chilled Anna, who was now for some time unused to this infallible gentility. She was ushered into a severely furnished, shiningly clean and sunny reception room that recalled suddenly to Anna's mind the sterilized air of the hospital. Why should the past throw out persistent tentacles to-day when she had cast it back?

"Anna!"

"Ruth!"

There was joy, after all, in seeing an old friend again! And in Ruth's large brown eyes there was the same serene light as if she had been walking in a garden since Anna had seen her last.

"Tell me everything!" Ruth demanded.

Oh, the horror of it! "No, I couldn't possibly, though I would do anything else to please you. But talk about my bygone months——!"

A shadow passed over Ruth's face.

"But I really want to know so much, and I wouldn't tell any one!" she pleaded.

So Anna sat down with Ruth on the wicker sofa by the window and told the story of her life since her hospital days, when she had left off writing even to her nearest friends at home. Everything she told step by step down to this last morning at the factory, even the two nights at the Kovalskys—everything except the name of John Bruce and the great power of the master.

Ruth listened with wide-open, wondering eyes, and when the tale was told, she folded her hands quaintly

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

over her knee and looked down, as it seemed to Anna, in hard thought.

"Do you know"—she began mysteriously, like a child telling a fairy tale—"do you know why I was so especially eager to find you in New York? Of course I was longing to see you again ever since I waved good-bye to you by the sea—but, Anna, there was something special in my mind! And, after all that I have just heard, I am not going to give up hope."

Ruth's pale cheeks were flushed and her dark eyes bright. Anna listened in silence, for she feared some distraction from her one great cause for being.

"You must know," Ruth went on, "that I am heart and soul in this new enterprise of father's"—with a sweeping gesture she pointed at the shining floor, the dazzling walls, and freshly painted doors of the room—"and I think that it is going to fulfill our hopes. We have fifty homeless children here already, and it has only been opened this winter. It is most fascinating work! I am doing a part of the management. That's why I am mostly in the office. But I always spend some time with the children in the afternoon, and I see them at their meals!"

Anna was wondering what connection she had with destitute children. Perhaps Ruth considered her a destitute child!

"Can you guess what I am aiming at?" asked Ruth eagerly and, when Anna shook her head, she went on: "I have been hoping that I could win you for our work. We need another worker in our Children's Aid Society who will investigate homes and find out what children need such a home as this. It is a hard task, but after all your experience, first at the hospital and then in the

JOHN BRUCE

slums here, you are just the right worker we need. When I heard from your aunt that you had left the stage—of course, she didn't know, and I couldn't guess, that you were going to work in a factory—my first thought was, perhaps she will take up our work next! But I never dreamed that all the while you were living in a tenement right among the people that give us our problems. Oh, I do hope you will consider it. I wish you would do it!"

Anna had feared distraction, but there was no danger now. The Home for Destitute Children and the Children's Aid Society left her quite cold!

"No, Ruth," she said firmly. "I could not think of it possibly. You don't seem to realize that the work I have pledged myself to do is going to take all my time and all my strength."

Ruth hung her head, and her eyes began to glisten.

"I am sorry," said Anna, taking Ruth's hand, and added in a tone less steely than when she had first replied: "You see, the great movements of the age sweep one along, and a single member of a public body like me cannot linger over its private likes and dislikes: my friends and enemies are henceforth only the friends and enemies of the cause!"

In the background of her mind Anna was wondering if John Bruce would have approved these words.

"But this strike will last only a few weeks at most, and then you will be free!" protested Ruth, unconvinced.

"Oh, but the paper will be printed long after the strike is over," Anna returned. "And, besides, the Brotherhood will keep on growing and growing and carrying out its wonderful, world-embracing task."

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"But do they need you?" Ruth asked slyly.

Anna drew herself up.

"Of course they need me!" she cried, with a militant ring in her voice. "They need every believer in the cause, and the more he can give the more he is needed. I can give my mind and my soul—I am willing to give my whole life for the cause!"

"The cause!" echoed Ruth skeptically.

"Yes, the cause!" Anna repeated, with growing excitement. "What do you think it matters whether one destitute child more or less gets food and shelter now, when there will always be multitudes and multitudes of destitute children and wasting women and starving men whom you will never find. Always, I say—but that is only as long as one class will keep on holding all the tangible goods of life in its grasp and the great host of toilers must slave for the bare right to live!"

Anna rose in her ardor, for she felt the invisible haunting presence of John Bruce, and the sense of it made her restless.

Ruth followed her sadly to the door.

"You must not be angry with me," said Anna. "It is not Anna Borden that is speaking to Ruth Gregory. It is a great, compelling force that is speaking through me to the blind world outside of the Brotherhood!"

"Good-bye, Anna!" said Ruth quietly. "No—I am not angry at you—only sorry, very sorry! And who knows," she added, with a mysterious luster in her eyes, "who knows but that some day you may come back here after all, and be glad to lend a hand when we help the homeless children!"

Anna's last sight of Ruth standing in the doorway like a mournful prophetess lingered in her mind as she walked

JOHN BRUCE

home through the street crowded with shouting ragamuffins. But the picture before her inward eyes was soon displaced by the persistent vision of her master, and she gave a sigh of relief because this last reminder of her past, this last tempter away from the cause, was now set aside. And this afternoon she would take up her work at the Kovalskys!

Ignatz Kovalsky was well satisfied with her presentation of the news that he had given her, and encouraged her to write little harangues on the strike and the cause. So Anna thought intensely about the speech of John Bruce that she had heard, and wrote exhortations that he might make to the Brothers. She wrote all afternoon together with Ignatz at the Kovalskys' table, and she shared with them the frugal supper that Olga and Anna Kovalsky cooked on the little gas stove in the corner of the room.

At last came John Bruce.

"Good evening!" he said, and paused a moment, perhaps surprised to find her at work so late. Then, with an abrupt jerk of his head, he turned away from Anna to Ignatz.

"I've been in Waterborough," he said, in his terse, straightforward way. "I'm getting up a grand parade of all the strikers for Sunday. I want it to be the biggest demonstration ever seen in New York State. I've had a hard time. The Italians are getting restless, and there are more scabs. After the meeting to-morrow, I'm going to stay in Waterborough altogether."

"Tell Miss Borden all about the parade," said Ignatz, "so she can write it up. We've been writing away all afternoon. It'll be a fine number that's coming out to-morrow night in time for the meeting."

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"I'll sell it to the people at the door when they come in," said his niece.

Anna was awed into silence by the mere presence of the master, and took down meekly the details of the coming parade. Again she was aware that John Bruce's austere eyes were reading her like a parchment scroll, this time not without a gleam of suspicion. Had he guessed her past? Did he know that she was holding ill-earned capital? She must make the confession!

"It's a cold windy night," said Olga Kovalsky, as the wind rattled against the window-panes, and chilly gusts blew in through the cracks. "You'd better stay here to-night Annie; I can spread out the extra mattress for you here on the floor. Your mother—she'll know you're here. But I'm afraid for you, Miss Borden—you'll blow away in this wild night."

"I'm going to walk along with Miss Borden, so she won't come to any harm." John Bruce had said it—gruffly, without a tinge of gallantry, but he had said it in truth!

When Anna stepped out into the sharp blast, shivering and drawing her scant fur scarf tightly round her neck, she felt as if she were setting sail on a savage wind-whipped sea and laying her life into the hands of a weather-beaten pilot. John Bruce must steer her life, even if he should bring shipwreck upon her!

He was walking silently beside her, heedless of the wind and the cold in his light working-suit without an overcoat. His silence awed Anna, who was aware, with throbbing temples that now the hour had come for her confession, but could not open her lips.

The wind was growing fiercer from moment to moment, as if there were an ominous unrest in the air.

JOHN BRUCE

John Bruce's weighty footsteps sounded rhythmically and firmly like beats of a drum through the wild noises of this night.

"Who are you?" John Bruce asked all at once, in a rough, stern voice.

Not only the hour, but the moment, had come for the painful confession, and Anna trembled violently, afraid as she was of the master.

"I am one of you——" she said hastily. "I am one of the Brotherhood, believe me——" and she bit her lip, enraged at her weak beginning.

"But what have you been till you joined with us?" he asked. "Have you been at shopwork all the time? You're not like one of us."

"No—why not?" cried Anna, in feverish excitement, for she could not discern whether there was admiration in his tone or deep reproach.

"There is something about you," he said—the words came slowly, momentarily from his lips—"that makes me think perhaps you're going to be my bad angel!"

Anna stood still on the street.

"Don't believe that!" she cried desperately. "Don't distrust me! I will tell you everything—I will confess my past life, so that you can see how truthful I am!"

"Oh, yes, come on, confess everything, then it'll be over," said John Bruce, with fierce vehemence.

But they walked on in a tense silence.

"Why aren't you telling me?" John Bruce asked gruffly.

"Because," said Anna—and she had never before felt as in this moment—"because I am afraid of you!"

John Bruce laughed abruptly.

"Afraid!" he exclaimed. "Afraid of me? Let the

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

mill-owners be afraid of me! Let the strike-breakers be afraid of me! Let the police—by Jove, let the militia be afraid of me! But you—you're the last in the world——"

As he spoke the last words, there was something almost plaintive in his voice, usually so brusque, that gave Anna courage to make her confession.

"You know," she began reluctantly, "I haven't been at my shopwork very long. I—I began it only because I wanted to help—I wanted to find out how to help the poor workers. Then I met Anna Kovalsky, and she took me to her uncle's——"

"I know that," John Bruce interrupted, "but what have you been before you went to the workshop?"

"An actress," Anna replied meekly.

"Oh, that's why!" exclaimed John Bruce, as if suddenly enlightened.

"What?" gasped Anna, mystified.

"That's why you are so different—that's why you have such queenly airs——"

"Queenly airs!" echoed Anna. "Queenly airs, indeed! I have never felt less queenly before. But I must tell you. I wasn't always an actress, either. Before then I was a nurse."

John Bruce stared at her.

"A nurse?" he asked, puzzled. "Do you mean a nurse-maid?"

"No," said Anna, too much in earnest even to smile. "A trained nurse in a hospital. I took care of sick people. I left it because one of the men I nursed was a poet and he wanted me to take the heroine's part in a play he had written; and, besides, I thought that acting was more in my line than nursing."

JOHN BRUCE

John Bruce was silent for a few moments, and seemed to be thinking hard.

"Where did you get your education?" he asked finally.

"For nursing, you mean?" said Anna.

"No, all your education," John Bruce replied, with a vague sweeping gesture which suggested that Anna's education had resulted in omniscience.

"That's what I have to confess!" Anna cried out, trembling from head to foot. "That's where my sin comes in. I haven't always been one of you. There was a time when I belonged with your enemies——"

"What do you mean?" John Bruce asked harshly.

"My father is a manufacturer," said Anna, at last, and a burden seemed to fall from her spirit. "He owns paper mills and I am living on the capital that you condemn."

"Now?" asked John Bruce curtly.

"Yes," was Anna's meek reply.

John Bruce walked on silently. His face was hard and set, and he stared ahead, never turning to look at his companion.

"What shall I do?" asked Anna humbly. "You see, the money is my own. I have broken with my father. I am all alone."

Anna was suddenly aware of the pathos of her own situation; but John Bruce remained unmoved.

"You aren't a spy, are you?" Abruptly he turned upon her a dark, suspicious glance.

"No, I swear I am not!" she cried out, in startled anguish. "What makes you distrust me so? You see, I have told you everything."

"Why did you leave your father?" asked John Bruce, still severely.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"Because I was tired of my idle life," Anna replied eagerly. "I wanted to do some useful work, so I entered the hospital."

"And then your father broke with you?" John Bruce asked uneasily, as if his mind were groping in the shadows of an unknown realm.

"No, not until I went on the stage; then I was disgraced. But what difference does all that make now? My past is behind me—dead, buried. My future is all one with the cause——"

"Are you sure of that?" John Bruce stood still and looked her in the eyes; by the light of the street lamp his own eyes gleamed sinister and severe.

"Yes, quite sure!" Anna cried, almost quaking beneath his glance. "I shall use my money in the service of the cause to atone for the evil way it was gained. I shall devote all my time to the cause, all my strength, all——"

Anna stopped short, startled by a large motor-car that came whizzing by them, although they were walking on an obscure side street of Second Avenue. John Bruce grasped Anna's arm, so that she stood still obediently.

"There they go!" he said, in a deep, prophetic voice. "Out of the darkness into the light! Out of the darkness of hunger and sorrow and aching bones into their places of laughing and costly wines and the precious silks that the hungry working girl makes with her rough, red hands for the millionaire's beautiful daughter——"

John Bruce looked up at the somber row of tenement houses, and Anna's eyes followed his glance. Few lights shone from the windows on the ill-lighted street, but in the background the lights from the skyscrapers were gleaming against the black star-lit sky. The magic

JOHN BRUCE

of New York touched Anna like the spell of some dream-city in the "Arabian Nights."

"These are our people," said John Bruce, "no matter where they came from, all the hungry people, the rough men and the tired women who work and work and never get what they ought to have, all the children born in the night, to race with hunger and die in the night—these are our people. All the rest don't count!"

Anna stood silently beside her leader, for the solemnity of this night was vibrating through her like a powerful current.

"All the rest don't count!" she echoed at last, under her breath, and it seemed to her that she had said: "All the rest of my life till you came and seized it doesn't count!"

They walked on in silence, a silence heavy with thought. Although Anna knew that in a few minutes they would reach her tenement house, she dreaded the end of this walk, because she was now altogether alive, and to-morrow was still dimmed by uncertainty, hidden like death.

"Here I live!" she said, in front of her house, not without some pride in the squalor of the neighborhood. "Good night!"

She had meant to ask: "Do you trust me now?" or something of the kind, but when the moment came words seemed too petty for John Bruce. She gave him her hand, which he took reluctantly at first, as if he were still suspecting a bad angel, but then grasped firmly till he almost crushed it with his large, strong hand.

Anna groped her way up the dark stairs of the tenement house. Evidently the stormy night had sent the inmates of the house early to bed. In her tenement she

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

lit a candle after feeling for a match and, shuddering at the prospect of a sleepless night, wished that the great mass meeting would begin in an hour.

It began the next night, however, at eight o'clock. Anna had not seen John Bruce all the long day that she had spent at the Kovalskys in preparing the Sunday number of the *Brotherhood*, which was to be a rousing war-cry. The three Kovalskys were now with her in the moderately large hall that was gradually being filled with darkly clad, furtive-eyed men and women. A group of swaggering Italians came in with fiery gestures and excited voices and dashed for the front seats. A Russian or Pole with frowning brow and a dark, threatening gleam in his eyes slouched by Anna and slid into a seat in an obscure corner. Two girls from the Regal Waist Company came in and laughed at Anna when they saw her stand by the door with Anna Kovalsky to distribute leaflets and sell papers.

"Say, is that your new job?" cried one of them, and Anna nodded indifferently.

Where was John Bruce? The hall would soon be crowded, and he had not yet come back from Waterborough! Ignatz Kovalsky was mounting the platform, to make his introductory remarks till the speaker should arrive. Anna did not listen to a word of his, but watched the doors uneasily. If he should have been hindered by a riot in the striking town? If he should have been drawn into a street-fight?

He was coming—he was coming in through the door by the platform. A thunderstorm of applause greeted him; the Italians in front rose, and, like a swelling wave, all the audience rose, too; a few scattered fanatics flourished red handkerchiefs.

JOHN BRUCE

Anna felt as if she were floating on the mighty wave of the crowd, and in her delirium she saw John Bruce pointing at the windows of the gloomy tenements alone in the hushed street with her. Now he was telling the many-headed audience, in a loud, inciting voice, what he had said to her in his deep prophetic tone. For a moment Anna was jealous of the crowd.

But as he spoke on with growing violence and fire, Anna became restless, and a new, unbridled longing seized her, a desire to join her master in the face of the throng.

"One class knows no joy," John Bruce was saying. "One class revels and wallows in it. But the dream of labor will come true. And we will not need guns or dynamite. We will just have to stop working and the capitalist class will freeze and starve to death. We are the life and the mainspring of the world. When we labor the world goes round. When we stop the world stops.

"But to win our fight we must have the support and loyalty of all workers, we must wage war as a united body, as the Toilers' Brotherhood! Do not stand back—do not side with the unions, for the unions are aristocratic and can do nothing—do not go over to the ranks of the enemy. Stand by your brother toiler, fight with the Toilers' Brotherhood!"

A roaring wave of applause rolled along the hall; the red handkerchiefs were fluttering again, and cries of "Three cheers for John Bruce!" "John Bruce is all right!" broke sharply into the rumbling murmur.

While John Bruce rested in the chair on the platform and wiped his forehead, Ignatz Kovalsky stepped up and asked: "Is there any one here who wants to say something?"

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

Anna was alive: she was more than alive, swept onward by a life outside of her own, torn along by a headstrong current without power or will to hold back. She rushed down the aisle, skipped onto the platform, and addressed the dark, murmuring crowd. Her lips spoke perhaps the same that John Bruce had just been saying, perhaps something new and inspired—but she herself was aware only of a dizzy sense that a great passionate throng was before her, and beside her John Bruce, the soul and master of all these blind strugglers and the master of her soul!

When her lips had finished speaking she reeled backward, half-faint from the strain of shouting and from fearful wonder what John Bruce would say. Applause, beautiful applause, exciting and soothing at once—applause long unheard since the days of Lily Spangle, rained upon her and cooled her fevered spirit.

"Good!" said John Bruce beside her. "That was wonderful. You'll make our best speaker yet!"

These words, uttered in a gruff, masterful voice, were all that Anna needed, and while others succeeded her on the platform she sank into a blissful oblivion of all the turmoil about her.

When the meeting was over, Anna found herself on the street with John Bruce. The Kovalskys were walking a few feet ahead, Poles and Italians were talking excitedly in front and behind her. John Bruce's footsteps were momentous, his silence was heavy with Anna's future, as she knew with a throbbing surety. But what future?

"You're wonderful!" said John Bruce abruptly, in his deep voice. "I've never seen any one like you, and I've never heard a speech like yours. Your voice——"

JOHN BRUCE

He stopped short, as if to break off frivolities, and went on gruffly: "I know this isn't the time for me to be making love. It's to the people I should belong altogether. But you belong to them, too—don't you, Anna? Swear you do!"

"I do, I do!" Anna whispered.

"I never married because I thought love would take me away from the people—but you!" His great voice shook as he said half a prayer, half a command: "Will you live in Waterborough with me and help win the strike?"

"I will!" said Anna, and to her it seemed that she had spoken the marriage vow.

They had turned into a little dark alley, away from the crowd. There John Bruce, the master, drew Anna powerfully into his arms. The silence was broken, and Anna's future lay before her clear, wonderful, fierce!

CHAPTER X

THE TOILERS' BROTHERHOOD

ANNA was watching her husband walk briskly down the narrow, dirty street below with Carlo Giodotti, the little Italian interpreter, toward the Waterborough Italian Hall where they were going to organize the Italian strikers for to-morrow's grand parade. Anna herself must go in a few minutes to help the Italian women cook for the poorest children in a general eating-hall, according to a scheme which she had thought out and supported herself; so there was little time for reflection. Yet she stole a minute's leisure at the window of her dingy, frosty little room in the Hotel Waterborough to watch her husband out of sight, and look back upon the first week of her marriage. A strange honeymoon, indeed! Ever since the day when they were married by the harsh-voiced, stern-faced Socialistic clergyman in his austere room with Anna Kovalsky and the timid, awe-struck Kate Crane as witnesses, her life had been like one tumultuous waving of a red flag to the rhythm set by her husband. Every day in Waterborough John Bruce had made his speech first—in a hall, on the Common, or in the street—and Anna had made hers like an echo of her husband's. Then there was the direct persuasion of the strikers not to betray their cause, the picketing at the mills where scabs still abounded, the cheering of the worn, frightened wives of strikers with

THE TOILERS' BROTHERHOOD

their hungry brood, and all the other duties of a labor leader's wife and comrade. Rest there was none, except the sleep of short nights, broken by noises on the lively street outside; the meals in the dirty Hotel Waterborough were scant and unsavory, the Bruces' one room dark and cold all day. For John and Anna were living on their salaries as leader and reporter, and Anna, although she had not quite dared to give away her capital at the stroke of a pen, was at least giving all her income to the Toilers' Brotherhood. Anna felt that life had clasped her at last with ungloved hand and had shown her the deep, serious lines of its face—her, who had been at play till John Bruce had called her and raised her to his own heroic height.

Off she must go to the Italian mothers! Anna slipped on her dark gray coat, threw a red woolen shawl over her head, and walked, rubbing her cold, gloveless hands, to the hall where the wives of Italian strikers were peeling potatoes. The sharp chatter in Italian hushed when Anna came in.

"Oh, Mrs. Bruce!" exclaimed a pale-faced young girl, with lips and hands blue from the cold. "My brother Giacomo can't stand it much longer!"

"What's the matter?" asked Anna, taking up a dishful of potatoes to peel.

"Little Carlo is sick," moaned the girl. "His hands were hot like fire, but he's shivering all the time—I saw him this morning. Giovanna hasn't got enough coal—it's awful cold in there——"

"I'll see that they are given money for coal from the relief fund, Maria," said Anna to the girl, and jotted down in her notebook: "Giacomo Gonelli—coal."

"If I could go back to work they wouldn't need to

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

beg," complained Maria Gonelli, and her unnaturally lustrous eyes filled with tears. "If you and your husband hadn't been after us all the time making us quit work we wouldn't be starving—and little Carlo wouldn't be sick!"

A burst of Italian from a group of shrill-voiced women kept Anna from answering, but while Maria nodded her assent, Anna caught only the oft-repeated Italian words for "hunger" and "children."

"You don't want to be a scab, Maria!" said Anna; she had said it a hundred times!

The Italian girl shook her head.

"No, I don't want to be a scab!" she cried feverishly through her tears. "I want to win the strike—I want to be like you and do what John Bruce says. He knows what's right! But it's hard——"

"Come with me to the relief office now," said Anna, "and then we'll go to your brother's together."

As the meager relief fund had been swelled to a goodly sum through Anna's gift, she felt entitled to direct the distribution, and, indeed, as the wife of John Bruce, her wishes were usually obeyed. The office was a little den over a grocery shop, where the diligent Lithuanian in charge of the relief fund gave Anna in cash the sum that was to be turned into coal for the sick little Carlo. Then she followed Maria to the top of an old, ill-smelling tenement house into a room where a lean, sharp-faced woman in a loose, ragged sack was crouching on a stool and trying to lull to sleep a screaming baby on her lap. In a cradle, tucked in pillows and a featherbed, a feverish child's head was barely seen, and on the floor three ragged, barefoot children from four to seven years old—two girls and a boy—were nibbling at crusts of bread.

THE TOILERS' BROTHERHOOD

A clothesline with dripping children's dresses was drawn across the room; on the stove was a single dipper with gruel.

"Good morning, Signora!" said Anna cheerfully. "Here is something to buy coal with for little Carlo."

The woman on the stool received the money with a weary smile for thanks, then murmured something in Italian to Maria. Anna meanwhile stepped to the cradle and felt the child's forehead.

"He is very feverish," she said to the mother. "You shouldn't cover him up so with the featherbed. Take the shawl you wear on the street and put that on him till you go out."

All the practices of Anna's past year as nurse, as actress, as factory worker were useful in her present life.

"You know so much!" said Maria, with a sigh.

The air in the room was damp and chilly, but close.

"You had better open the window a little and let in some good air for Carlo," said Anna, whereupon Maria shuddered, and the mother cried, pointing to the cradle:

"The cold wind—and him freeze to death!"

But in a little while they obeyed and the brisk air from outside blew into the ill-smelling room. The children woke out of their indifference at the sight of the dancing snowflakes and crept up to Anna with wondering faces. The baby on the woman's lap had stopped crying, and it seemed as if a beam of cheer had lighted up the mother's haggard face. When Anna started to go, the children pulled her back by the sleeve, but Anna warded them off playfully, shaking her head.

"I must go on," she said to Maria, for the children understood no English. "I want to see how Luigia Mellini's bad knee is getting on, then I must go back

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

into the hall and help; they will have everything cooked before I come. Now don't forget the parade to-morrow at four o'clock in the Common. You tell all the girls you see to come out! Everybody must be there. It is going to be the grandest parade ever seen in Waterborough! I'm going to stir up the Lithuanians this afternoon. John has been getting the Poles. John Bruce will head the parade," said Anna, with dramatic emphasis on her husband's name. "You won't fail me!"

"No, I won't fail you," said Maria, with shining eyes. "I'll come to the parade."

Anna left the home of the Gonellis for another dreary room in the adjoining tenement house, where Luigia Mellini lay on the one bed, moaning over the pain in her knee which she had injured when she had fallen on the ice, pushed by a policeman. Luigia's father and brothers were loitering by the door, and to them Anna called, as she left the patient:

"Don't forget the parade to-morrow—the grandest parade ever seen in Waterborough!"

"Your husband just told us so," returned one of the brothers, a great brawny fellow, "over at Italian Hall. You'll see me carrying a red flag, Mrs. Bruce!"

"Hurrah for you, Signor Mellini!" cried Anna, with a flourish of her arm. "And get together all the fellows you know—we've got to show the Mayor what we can do!"

"Sure—you bet!" cried the Italians, as Anna hurried out of the door, to rush back to the common kitchen that she had left with Maria.

Thus the morning passed with the Italian women, and when she rejoined her husband at their frugal noon dinner in the hotel, she gave him a report of her morn-

THE TOILERS' BROTHERHOOD

ing's work, as a school child might to a teacher. When John would nod approval, Anna's heart beat with a childish glee, and when he would lay his massive arm round her shoulders at hurried intervals between conferences and speeches, it seemed to Anna that a stern hero's caress was worth her constant toil. But to-day Anna could see that the gleam in his eyes was not inspired by her, and that he was listening to her with half an ear.

"They have forbidden parades," he broke out at last. "The dogs!"

His face was fierce and sullen.

"Oh, but we'll have it just the same!" cried Anna. "They have no right to forbid them!"

"That's so!" cried her husband, and heartily clasped Anna's hand. "You're my wife, all right! You've got the true spirit! It'll be the finest showing yet! Now I've got the Italians and the Poles, the Lithuanians——"

"I'm going to work on the Lithuanian women this afternoon," Anna interrupted.

"All right!" said John. "I've got to go to the Syrians—they're pretty sure. But the Greeks are a bad lot; they're threatening to start a union of their own; Raulis told me so!"

"Good luck—victor!" cried Anna, as her husband started off again, to work for the grand parade.

The next day at four o'clock a great polyglot throng was assembled on the Waterborough Common, and more and more were swarming out of the streets. Here dark-skinned, melancholy Syrians, there a blond, hearty Lithuanian, a group of Italians with violent gestures and lusty shouts, Poles with hatred glowering in their eyes passed Anna as she stood in the confused crowd. Women

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

wrapped in shawls—some bright blue and scarlet—looked at Anna inquiringly as if they were lost, or asked in a foreign accent: "Where shall I go?"

Red flags were fluttering in the cold wind, the band-players blew on their freezing hands, the impatient paraders were stamping and waving their arms against the numbing cold. Anna herself shivered and rubbed her hands, stiff in spite of the torn woolen mittens.

"All ready to start, Anna!" John Bruce said first to her, then whistled to the multitude. The band struck up the martial air, and a momentous volume of voices discordant and singing in different tongues, but all inspired with the same defiant zeal, burst into the anarchistic hymn, "L'Internationale."

Anna marched beside her husband and three of his comrades and sang heartily, for, in spite of the biting cold and the snowy ground, she was walking to the beat of the march without effort, as if she were flying. Down Progress Street they marched, the main thoroughfare, where the citizens that were not taking part in the parade stood in front of the shop doors to watch, or looked down from the windows, cheering or hissing as the strikers went by.

"Look, John, the police!" Anna cried to her husband, above the din of the singing, for a band of policemen was strutting toward them down the street.

"Never mind!" said John Bruce. "We'll brush them away. The militia will be here soon; we've got to save up for them."

Undismayed they marched on till the stout policemen stood planted in front of them.

"Halt!" they ordered.

"Come on, boys! Don't mind a trifle!" cried John

THE TOILERS' BROTHERHOOD

Bruce, and in a quick aside to Anna he commanded her to step a few rows back.

Anna obeyed reluctantly, and in the next moment she saw her husband and his three companions dart forward against the policemen, as if they would break through the line. But, horror! One policeman was brandishing his club in the air, ready to let it drop on her husband if he stirred. Would he——? No, he stood still, but defiantly, and Anna heard his strong, deep voice above the murmur of the crowd challenge:

"What are you troubling us for? We're not doing anything against the law!"

"Don't you know the Mayor has forbidden parades?" shouted the puffing policeman.

"He has no right to forbid parades," declared John Bruce, and Anna wondered with a wildly beating heart if he was carrying his pistol in his pocket.

"What's up?" "Go on, don't stop!" Shouts in Italian and Polish Anna heard from behind, while she was being pushed forward by the violent surging crowd. All the marchers beside her and in front were driven forward, too, driven on and on till a momentous body of restless marchers flung itself against Anna's husband and his mates at the head of the throng, so that they had to press against the policemen who staggered back and gave way to the roaring tide. The parade was no longer a parade, but dissolved into a riotous flood. In the tumult Anna lost sight of her husband, and found herself in a crowd of shouting Italians.

"They're killing him, they're killing him!" screamed a wild-eyed woman, clutching Anna's arm.

"Whom?"

No answer, only shouts and screams. Rising on tip-

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

toe, Anna then could see a policeman beating strikers with his club, beating them on their backs, their shoulders, their arms, and the infuriated men spring like tigers upon the squirming officer.

"On—on to the mills!" That was her husband's voice, loud and firm above the roar. Thereupon the seething mass pressed onward down the street, bearing Anna along, who now herself, inspired by her husband, was crying lustily:

"On to the mills! On to the mills!"

In front of the Carlton Woollen Mill the crowd halted: some were thrown into the high mounds of snow heaped up by the sidewalk, some slipped and fell on the ice-crusted pavement.

A whistle blew and three workmen came slouching out of the mill, dinner-pails in their hands, followed by others in little groups.

"Scabs! Scabs!" Shrill, fierce cries and threatening shouts pierced Anna's ears, and in an instant snowballs, stones and chunks of ice rained on the strike-breaking traitors, who, running for their lives, plunged into the raging mob.

Shots cracked into the air!

"The soldiers—the soldiers!" A current of growls, threats and curses swept through the multitude.

"Don't get wild!" John Bruce's voice was commanding. "Keep together—never mind them at all! But if they shoot, strike back and don't be afraid!"

Anna was longing to join her husband, to hold on to his arm when the soldiers would press near him; but she could barely see his gray hair, from which the hat had fallen, and that was soon out of sight.

Another shot—another!

THE TOILERS' BROTHERHOOD

"Oh——!" That was real shooting; a bullet was whizzing over the heads of the men who stood where Anna had last seen her husband. Was John fighting—had he his pistol, surely? The crowd plunged forward screaming, roaring like a savage beast. Anna joined in the war-cry and longed for a weapon, if only a knife! The rifles of the soldiers were now gleaming before her eyes. They were pressing on toward her——

"Kill them—kill them!" a strange, wild man beside her was shouting, and in an instant he fired his pistol, and another shot answered from somewhere——

"Ohi!—Aiuto!" A woman's scream, shrill, heart-rending!

Anna rushed forward and saw a young woman lie in the snow, blood streaming from her breast: it was Maria Gonelli!

The crowd, suddenly hushed, was standing awed and spellbound at the sight.

"Get the ambulance—quick!" Anna commanded the men round her. Then she knelt down at the side of the dying woman whom she had urged yesterday to join the parade, and with her handkerchief tried in vain to stop the flow of blood. When Anna looked up, her husband was standing beside her, with a grave cloud on his war-like face.

"Did a soldier kill her?" John Bruce asked Anna. "I think so," Anna whispered, "but I'm not sure; it was all so quick!"

"A soldier killed her!" cried a voice from behind, and a threatening howl swept over the subdued throng.

The ambulance made its way through the mass; John Bruce and Anna lifted the limp woman into the wagon, and Anna rode with her to the near hospital. When they

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

laid her on a bed in the emergency room, the physician's face was grave, and he was silent, but Anna had seen death often enough to know that Maria Gonelli was dead.

Round the hospital pressed a clamoring crowd.

"Dead!" said Anna, as she stepped down to the street, and a wail rose from the mass. With bowed heads the strikers were beginning to disperse, quietly save for low murmurs and women's sobs, when a furious cry startled all:

"The soldiers killed her—damn them!"

It was Giacomo, Maria's brother, who perhaps had only just heard of his sister's fate and came running to Anna, maddened by grief.

"How did they kill her—tell me all!" he challenged Anna. But she could only shrug her shoulders and say mournfully:

"I saw her lie in the snow, shot in the breast."

"Damn them!" muttered Giacomo, and ran into the hospital. But Anna walked on with the crowd.

It was a night of mourning in Waterborough, and John Bruce and Anna were bowed down with the grief of leaders responsible for life and death.

"If they say a striker killed her," said Anna's husband, "they'll blame me, and I'll be arrested."

"Arrested!" Such a possibility had never troubled Anna; of death she had thought in dark hours, of wounds and bruises, but never of imprisonment: her husband in prison!

"But it was a soldier who killed her," said Anna in defiance of an ugly thought. "I am almost sure now. I heard a man beside me fire first and then another shot after—a soldier killed her, surely!"

THE TOILERS' BROTHERHOOD

"I've got to go and calm down the men—the Italians are in a state!" said John when the town clock struck the eighth hour. "I can't be sitting here talking to you, Anna."

"We're scarcely ever alone," Anna complained gently.

"It's a hard time now," said John Bruce, with the old stern gleam in his dark blue eyes. "And it's no time for trifling. I love my wife—God knows! But this is the time when I must live or die for the Brotherhood!"

"Not die!" said Anna, for already the shadow of death was brooding over them too gloomily.

When her husband had gone out, an old line—was it from Milton?—came into her mind:

Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep!

Then the vision, so fresh in her mind, of the lovely young Maria Gonelli lying in the snow with the red blood streaming from her wound, made Anna brush away all idle meditation and go out to the dreary home of Giacomo, Maria's brother, to console him and his wailing, grief-stricken wife Giovanna and the neighbors who had come to moan and moan.

The next day a cloud hung over the whole town, and every striker that Anna passed on the street looked at her gloomily, yet with a kind of understanding, like a brother or sister in grief. There was to be a great funeral procession the next day for which John and Anna were preparing the strikers of all tongues.

"Not a parade—but a funeral procession," said John Bruce emphatically when he saw policemen in the hall where he was speaking glower at him, greedy for an offense.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

To Anna it seemed that her husband was more sinister to-day than ever before.

"You know, Anna," he said darkly, when they were alone together during their short noon meal. "They've found dynamite near the Swansgate Mill on Clark Street. The police say we planted it there—but it's a damned lie! It's a put-up job. The owners did it to give the Mayor another complaint against us! They'll be shooting us again for that! But I know, because Pietro saw some thugs who weren't any of our men sneaking round the corner of Clark and River Streets, and when they spied him they ran for life!"

"There'll be more trouble," said Anna. "It's in the air."

"They're afraid," said John bitterly, "because the public is siding with us now, on account of the Gonelli woman's death."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Anna. "All the papers have big headlines and pictures. Did you see the one of me holding a flag in the *Morning News*?"

"You can't be in the paper enough," said her husband, without stopping to answer. "We've got to make the whole world take notice. The Carlton and Swansgate Mills want to arbitrate with their employees. I've forbidden the men to treat. Either the whole Brotherhood is going to be recognized and treated with or the strike stays on!"

"There's a newspaper man wants to see Mr. Bruce!" some one shouted into the squalid dining-room. John Bruce rushed off, leaving his ham and eggs half-eaten, and Anna did not see her husband all afternoon.

On the street Anna saw crowds gathering at different

THE TOILERS' BROTHERHOOD

corners and heard loud disputes in different tongues.

"What's the matter?" she asked a man who looked as if he might understand English.

"The power-house and the gas workers of the Jones and Carlton Mills have struck."

"Hurrah!" cried Anna, clapping her hands. "Then they'll have to shut down altogether. The scabs won't do them any good!"

This news buoyed up Anna's spirits throughout the afternoon of funeral preparation, and she could barely wait to talk it over with her husband. Would the mill-owners grant the ten per cent. increase? Would the strike soon be over?

When Anna returned to her hotel at nightfall, John had not yet come home, so, because their room was too damp and chilly to sit there and wait for him and the hall was full of loud, smoking strangers, she went out again among the mourning Italians and did not come back till after eight o'clock.

When she entered the hall, she was startled by a din of rough voices.

"He sneaked down the back way!"

"Why didn't you catch him, you fool!"

This was addressed to a messenger-boy.

"Did he have a pistol?"

"Only a knife!"

"The cur——!"

One of the men turned round and saw Anna, who had been listening noiselessly.

"Your husband's hurt!" he cried hoarsely. "There was a man——"

Anna flew upstairs, driven by torturing fear. John was sitting on the bed—oh, the relief!—and trying clum-

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

sily to bind a soiled handkerchief with his right hand round his left wrist that was bleeding hard.

"Oh, John——!"

Swiftly Anna snatched the cotton that she kept for injured strikers, and bandaged the bleeding wrist with her old hospital art.

"Who dared?" she asked her husband who, indifferent to pain, had sunk into hard, gloomy thought.

Not till Anna had finished bandaging his wrist did he seem quite aware of her presence; then he forced his face into a bitter smile.

"A man just sneaked in here—a sickly snake of a man—and he was just lifting his knife to stick it into me, when I caught his arm by the wrist and wrestled with him, till I pushed him out of the door. Oh, it's some scab's revenge! It was only a scratch this time for me—didn't amount to anything. But you'd better be ready for the worst, Anna Bruce! I ought to be telling you how to lead the strike when——"

Anna laid her hand on John's mouth.

"I don't want to think of death!" she cried. "You—so strong, such a great man; I don't believe you can die!"

John Bruce laughed grimly.

"Well, I'm still alive," he cried, rising from the bed and walking to the window. "And I'll take care to have that fact known the world over!"

"Do you know that the power-house and gas workers have struck?"

"Yes," John Bruce nodded with unruffled calm. "The Jones and Carlton Mills have offered five per cent. raise—but we don't stop short of ten per cent., if we starve for it."

John Bruce laughed fiercely. But Anna could not

THE TOILERS' BROTHERHOOD

laugh: the cloud of death was brooding over her and the voices in her heart were dirges.

The funeral procession on the next day, early in the afternoon, only deepened the gloom within her. Maria Gonelli had been buried according to the rites of her faith and her nationality in the morning, and now the great polyglot company was marching in slow, solemn step to her grave. There were no brass band players this time, no red flags; but an Italian woman carried a large white wreath and there was a wailing of sad dirges. Policemen followed the procession and soldiers stood frowning at street corners, but the escorts of death had a free pass to-day. When they reached the wide, hushed graveyard, the dirges ceased, the men took off their slouch hats and caps and the women bowed their heads. Past graves fresh with flowers the ragged procession was straggling, awed and subdued, and John Bruce and Anna who led it stood still before the grave of Maria, where the Italian woman laid down the wreath and crossed herself; a solemn murmur trembled along the line of mourners. Anna looked at her husband, for she had thought that he would speak at Maria's grave, but he remained silent.

On the way back from the graveyard the tense solemnity gave way to natural talk, as if the mourners were relieved to drop from their majestic height to the plane of human garrulousness. But from Anna's gloom there was no relief, and she looked at her husband furtively, as if she were afraid of his thoughts.

"That's where they put the dynamite!" said John, when they passed the Swansgate Mill.

"Oh!" Then they walked on in silence again.

"I'd rather have another street-fight," Anna burst out

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

finally, when they were back in their room in Hotel Waterborough, "than this solemn, horrible suspense!"

John Bruce looked out of the window on to the swarming street with the stern, prophetic gleam in his eyes, like sunlight on a sword.

"You know," he said slowly, as if hesitating to confide to her his most precious idea, "if there was another street-fight, I've thought of a stunt that would be a great thing to do——"

"What?" Anna's heart beat violently.

"See, we can't prove that it was a soldier's bullet that killed the poor Gonelli woman, though we know it and they know it, too—— But if some of us men would just throw ourselves on the soldiers' bayonets—wouldn't that be a fine argument?"

John Bruce laughed his big grim laugh, and Anna shuddered.

"John!" she almost screamed. "Promise you will never do it! Even if you are a hero, you have a wife who would die of grief. You have no right to die while I am living—promise me!"

"No, I won't do it because I have a wife!" he said in a soothing tone; then he embraced her hastily and rushed to the door.

"Where are you going now?" Anna asked, resigned.

"To the headquarters," her husband replied. "I'm expecting news from the Jones and Carlton Mills. The enemy was giving in, you know, and—who knows?—before the week's over we may have won the fight!"

Anna leaped up and clapped her hands.

"That's the joyful battle-cry again!" she cried, glad that the gloomy cloud was dispelled. "Bring me good news from the enemy!"

THE TOILERS' BROTHERHOOD

John did not come home that night till after Anna had fallen asleep from the fatigues of the last days, and before she woke up in the morning, he was already gone. No doubt, he was at the Brotherhood's headquarters, the improvised office where the strikers received official news. Thither Anna went soon, while the town was still drowsy, and the morning air was sharp. Hardly had she crossed the threshold of the little office when John shouted at her:

"Ten per cent. raise—we've won!"

Anna reeled backward, dizzy with joy.

"Every one?" she gasped.

"All except Thornton's—but they'll give in before night."

Then Anna danced about in glee.

"Victory!" she cried exuberantly. "Victory, John Bruce!"

Then she shook hands with the other men in the office, with Pietro, the Italian interpreter, with the Lithuanian, the Pole, the Greek.

"We're going to celebrate to-morrow," said Pietro in a melodious cadence. "We ain't going back to work till Monday—it's Sunday to-morrow."

Celebrate! Anna gave a glad sigh of relief. A joyful celebration at last after sinister meetings, martial parades, riots and funerals!

"We've won the strike!" she shouted on the street at every man or woman who looked like a striker, and all the morning she rushed from tenement to tenement among her comrades, till the glorious news spread like a fire, kindling joy in the homes of the melancholy strikers. The newspapers followed soon with:

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

STRIKE OVER! TEN PER CENT RAISE!

in large thick headlines and dramatic pictures of John and Anna Bruce. To be the wife of a hero had been Anna's lot during the past weeks, but to be the wife of a victorious hero was new and rapturous.

"My hero is my husband!" she said to herself, and laughed in exultation.

The Sunday celebrations were held in different halls, and John and Anna, with the interpreter for each group, walked from one joyful gathering to another in a grand sweep of triumph. In each hall the clapping burst upon them like thunder, and when John Bruce had finished his festive speech, the air of "L'Internationale" seemed to engulf them in its voluminous swell.

In the Italian hall especially the cheers were loud and long.

"John Bruce!" "Anna Bruce!" resounded in Anna's ear, till she felt as if she must die from too much happiness. She dared not think that this triumphant day would end, and strikers would go back to their routine work on the morrow.

"Even though we won this strike," her husband was saying, "don't forget that this was only one battle in the great war with the enemy—capital—the war that will never end, till the worker owns the wealth that he makes with his hands in the sweat of his brow, and there has come the peace of the Toilers' Brotherhood."

Only a battle! Anna was glad: she would see the red flags, she would face a shouting crowd again! And when she and her husband walked back to the Hotel Waterborough, through the glistening snow under the

THE TOILERS' BROTHERHOOD

windows of the tenements where small lights were still burning, Anna thought of the night in New York when John Bruce had looked up at the windows of the tenements there and had revealed to her the deepest essence of his cause.

"They will all go back to-morrow," said John gravely.

"And we?" said Anna, clinging to his arm.

"We are going back to New York to tell all about our victory," he answered, "but there may be a strike just beginning in Cranfield or Wintertown or any place in the state. Then I've got to jump in right in the nick of time and lead another big fight like this one."

"Another victory!" cried Anna.

Then they stepped into their hotel, where the men in the smoky hall were humming "L'Internationale" and an old Pole was unfurling for a group of enthusiastic Italians a great red flag with large black letters that said: *"The Toilers' Brotherhood."*

CHAPTER XI

DAILY BREAD

ANNA was reading the newspapers piled up for the last six weeks, reading her name and John's in headlines of all sizes. Newspapers lay scattered on the floor, on the bed in the shabby room of the New York inn, newspapers were flying across the room in the gust of chilly wind that came blowing through the crack of the little window. Now that the strike was over and she had left the battlefield for New York, Anna was clinging to the trace of the fierce six weeks in print.

"Over!" she said to herself. "All over!" But at least she and John were going to make speeches every night of this week at mass meetings in different parts of New York, Brooklyn and the suburbs; at least they could echo the martial noise of the "Internationale" and paint before the minds of curious throngs the scenes of these six weeks of reddest life. John had promised her this part of fiery story-telling, and he himself would unfurl the doctrine of the Brotherhood, curse the oppressor and gain for the cause crowds yet unwon.

"Woman killed in riot!" Anna let the paper slide to the floor and mused: "Oh, how she would make the story of poor Maria's death a magic potion to thrill and sway the hearts of her listeners, so that this death should become the seed of numberless new-souled lives!"

A thump at the door and a messenger-boy with a telegram.

DAILY BREAD

"You Mrs. Bruce?" said the boy, blowing on his numb hands. "This was addressed to the headquarters of the Toilers' Brotherhood, an' they sent me here!"

Anna snatched the telegram. Had John been attacked? Since the victory, all the harrowing thoughts of danger had blown away.

Aunt Sarah very ill—wants to see you.

GEORGE BORDEN.

Her father! Now—at this time of all times! A chill crept through her; an ugly embarrassment seized her like a nightmare of a well-known face long unseen rising up ghost-like and reproachful in the midst of forbidden revels.

And yet—why? She was married now, not only to John Bruce, but with him to the Toilers' Brotherhood. And—the horror of it!—her father was John's arch-enemy; it was such as her father that her husband cursed before cheering mobs; it was against such as her father that she herself had been waving the red flag of anarchy.

But after all, the main point which Anna had almost overlooked—so great had been the shock from her father's signature—was the illness of poor Aunt Sarah. Perhaps the gentle little hemstitching, alms-giving life was tapering to an end, and there would be no nodding, silver-gray head in the sunny room with the canary bird, the geraniums and the dotted muslin curtains! Anna wondered if she had written to thank Aunt Sarah for her Christmas package, for she could not remember now; so much had happened since!

There lay the telegram, like an insignificant rag of paper among the newspapers with the glaring headlines

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

that told the story of her recent life. If this rag of a telegram had only been lost on the way, if the boy that brought it had not found her obscure hotel, if they only had not known Anna Bruce's address at the headquarters of the Brotherhood! If her father only were not such a newspaper reader, and had not followed up the deeds of Anna Bruce! But how did he know that she was John Bruce's wife? From her banker, no doubt, through whom she had given her year's income to the Brotherhood.

But the fateful telegram had found its way into her cold, trembling hands, and she would have to repeat it to John—John Bruce who had never heard of Aunt Sarah! He would think her mad if she told him that she had to take the next train to Boston to see a sick aunt! A sick aunt forsooth, when there had been sickness and hunger and death about her for the last weeks and not in rooms like Aunt Sarah's with the geraniums! Besides, she could not make the journey with money taken from John's meager salary, and her own income belonged to the Brotherhood. Above all, it was impossible to leave now when great polyglot crowds in New York were waiting for her account of the strike this evening and every night of the week. It was impossible—

Anna sat motionless, resting her chin in her hand, among the scattered newspapers, till she heard her husband's footsteps in the hall. She snatched up the telegram and hid it in her sleeve.

"Getting ready your speech?" said John as he came into the room and glanced at the papers. "There'll be a fine crowd to-night, Kovalsky thinks. He's been stirring up the men on his street. Now, Anna, he wants to

DAILY BREAD

know if you're going on with the work on his paper, and I said I supposed of course you would."

"Oh, yes, I will!" said Anna. "I can make blood-curdling stories out of Waterborough!"

"It isn't only that," said John, "but, when this week of speech-making is over, I'll have to tour the state—there's going to be trouble in more towns than one now! Then I can keep you posted you see, and you can give the *Brotherhood* all the latest news red-hot——"

"Yes, of course!" Anna replied. "I'll begin to-morrow." Work was in full swing, and Aunt Sarah out of question! Why trouble John at all with something so foreign to him and so unharmonious with their common task? So Anna kept the telegram in her sleeve, and not till John had gone out again did she send the reply:

Grieved over Aunt's illness—hope she is improving fast—very sorry that important duty prevents me from coming.

ANNA.

When the girl in the telegraph office had repeated these final words and taken them away to be shot to Boston, where they would no doubt wound like bullets, Anna breathed a deep sigh of relief. There was now no stepping back, and she was free once more to think with undivided mind of her great speech to-night.

And Anna felt at home again when she stood on the platform and the noise of clapping hands, the cheers of rough, ardent voices braced her once more and gave her the desired sense that she could no longer do without—the sense of swaying masses by opening her lips. As she had lived through every syllable of the story she told, to speak as if she were living it again cost her no

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

effort; only to find an end to her speech was hard. When she had finished and the applause so grateful to her ears was dying down, there was still her husband's speech, the invective, the prophecy, the climax to her own which excited her as if she were giving it herself and at the same time thrilled her as if she had never heard his familiar curses before, so that she had an impulse to join in the burst of clapping and cheers. There were hisses, too, for this was not Waterborough, the scene of the Brotherhood's strike, but New York that sheltered both the seeing and the blind—yet Anna relished these peppery sounds in the sweetness of applause.

"That was a pretty good night!" said John Bruce when they were walking home in the cold night air.

"Pretty good!" Anna repeated. "It was fine!"

This was not the first time that her husband had been merely satisfied when she had felt the flush of triumph.

"How did you like my speech?" she asked her school-master.

"Good!" he replied. "Don't slacken your fire though, any night this week."

"Whew! Every night this week!" exclaimed Anna with a shiver, for the night wind was blowing sharply. "Well, I'm glad. I couldn't live without speech-making! But, oh my, John, I'm tired!"

Hardly had she uttered these last words, when she wished them unsaid, for John was looking at her with the same stern, exacting glance that had pierced her that first night at Ignatz Kovalsky's.

"Perhaps this has been too hard for you," he said gravely—a little gruffly, too, "living in Waterborough—parading and all that!"

DAILY BREAD

"No, no, not at all!" cried Anna, piqued. "What do you take me for?"

They walked on in silence, till John said abruptly: "When we'll have a home of our own after this week, you can stay there and rest."

Not since the very first days of their marriage had John uttered a wish for his own life that was not bound up with the Toilers' Brotherhood. To be sure, they had decided hurriedly to take a tenement somewhere near the Brotherhood's headquarters and Olga Kovalsky had hired one for them not far from Anna's former haunt. But John had just mentioned the "home of our own" with a gruff wistfulness that startled Anna not a little. A home without strikers, without parades, without speeches——

"I'll never give up speech-making as long as I have a voice!" she declared, and her husband replied:

"That's the right spirit!" and he added in the tone of concern for the cause which assured Anna that her husband was his old self: "You've got to give a ripping good account of this meeting in Kovalsky's paper to-morrow!"

They had reached their squalid hotel and when she entered the noisy, close and ill-smelling hall, the prospect of a home was pleasant after all, where at last she could sleep without being waked in the middle of the night by thumping footsteps at her door. And she needed sleep!

Anna's fatigue was a stubborn fact that could not be crushed, and it annoyed her because it never escaped her husband's eye. She took up her journalist's work again, however, and while John was at the Brotherhood's headquarters or arranging mass-meetings, she spent her days at the Kovalskys, writing accounts of her own and

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

her husband's speeches and glowing reminiscences of the strike. Then, when the evening came, with the aid of bad black coffee, her spirits would be whipped up again to the orator's pitch; and she forgot her weariness in the bracing presence of the beloved crowd.

It was late on Saturday afternoon, when Anna was looking over her notes for her last speech of the week in Brooklyn, that another telegram came and with it a fear that had been suppressed during the active week. After Anna had sent off the telegram refusing to come to Aunt Sarah's bedside, she had written her father a short letter, asking him to give her news of the patient's condition; and till now no news had come. Anna stared at the envelope, loathing to open it, because she guessed its contents too well——

But perhaps this was not the dreaded news after all, but something for John from some striking town. Yet it was addressed "Anna Bruce"! Oh, but the speech in Brooklyn to-night, with which she had meant to impress her husband especially, so that he would not think of her strength as failing! She would not open the telegram till after the meeting to-night! But then the suspense——

Anna tore open the envelope and read:

Sarah died last night.

GEORGE BORDEN.

Anna's soul was numb. Why was it that she could not bear the thought of this death? Had she not watched the coming of death at the hospital? Had she not seen Maria Gonelli drop dead before her eyes? She would not miss Aunt Sarah, surely, in the life that she was

DAILY BREAD

leading now. Poor dear Aunt Sarah! Her death was a gentle not-to-be among the geraniums where the canary bird used to chirp, a ceasing to hover kindly about the house. Anna wondered what her father would do all alone in the big house. That was the thought which she could not bear, a thought so much like a reproach! Now she wished that she had gone home when the first telegram came. But, after all, even a death-bed visit could not have bridged over the gulf between her father and Anna Bruce——

Oh, that cursed speech to-night; she could not give it—no!

But when her husband came for her at seven o'clock, there was no more doubt in her mind that she was going to give the speech, and of the telegram she said not a word.

"Why are you shivering so?" asked John when they were riding over Brooklyn Bridge. "It's not so cold to-night."

"Am I shivering?" said Anna blandly.

"Yes, and you're pale," said John with his stern glance. "What's the matter?"

"Nothing," said Anna, and fumbled over her notes, for the first time dreading her speech.

The hall in Brooklyn was not very large, but fairly well filled; the air was overheated, and made Anna a little faint.

"You speak first!" she besought her husband.

"Why?" he returned.

"I don't feel as steady as usual," she replied evasively. "But I will after your speech."

"All right, this time!" John responded.

As Anna listened to her husband's passionate oratory,

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

she wondered what her father's sensations would be if he were down there among the audience.

"The capitalists are the robbers that snatch the bread from your mouths——"

How often had she heard these words and repeated them, but to-day from some unfathomed depth in her soul the voice of the wounded Anna Borden was clamoring against Anna Bruce.

When the applause for John's speech had subsided, Anna rose heavily, and with a forced, leaden voice told the story of the strike that she had told so often, but this time quite without her accustomed joyful oblivion of all except her speech and her sway over the hearers. To-day, on the contrary, she hardly listened to her own words, for the voices within her were so distracting, and, moreover, she felt that she was losing hold of her audience. A woman in the front row was yawning, an old man sat with eyes closed; in back there seemed to be some whispering. Oh, the disgrace!

When she had finished and a languid applause had followed her poor speech, Anna dared not look up at her husband. Fortunately, two men whom John knew rode home with them, so that she could remain silent till they were back in their cheerless room. Still John said nothing.

"Olga Kovalsky can help you buy the furniture Monday," were his first words after a brooding silence. To be sure, the tenement that was to be their home was free on Monday and they had still to buy their scanty furniture; but why should he mention that now?

"I'll have to go to Readham with the seven o'clock train Monday morning. They're just ready to strike for a five per cent. raise and double pay for overtime at

DAILY BREAD

the Roland Silk Mills. Some of them are Brotherhood men. I've got to go there and get the strike started and win more for the Brotherhood——"

"How long will that take?" asked Anna and a vision of the red flag in a striking mill-town was already luring her away from New York, the haunt of discordant associations.

"A few days perhaps——" John replied.

"Then I'm going with you!" Anna declared.

"No, you're not," said her husband calmly. "You're not fit to go."

"What do you mean?" cried Anna enraged, while the blood rushed to her cheeks.

"You're too tired now. This affair at Readham isn't the only trouble. Carducci got news this morning from Burmington, Cranfield and Jamestown, and there's discontent in the wool and cotton mills in these places. They only need an organizer and they're ready to strike. I'll just have to rush from place to place, and there'll be more towns in need of me soon. It'll be a strenuous trip; you'd break down if you came along."

"Ungrateful!" cried Anna. "Was I in your way at Waterborough?"

"No," said John in a cool, judicial tone. "You did first-rate work in Waterborough. But you're tired now——your speech showed it to-night."

Her speech—she knew that this must come sooner or later! Anna was quivering with fury.

"There was a special reason why that speech was bad to-night," she said bitterly. "A reason I didn't tell you because I knew you wouldn't understand."

She took the last telegram from her father out of her

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

bag, and handed it to John, who read it with a blank face.

"Who is Sarah," he asked with a frown, "and who is George Borden?"

"George Borden is my father," said Anna haughtily, "and Sarah was my aunt who brought me up——"

Oh, what blundering genius had prompted her to show John this telegram? What could he care about Aunt Sarah? Did John have an aunt? He had no parents—only a brother out west—where, she neither knew nor cared. How silly of her——

"Were you very fond of your aunt?" John asked clumsily.

"Yes, I was," Anna faintly replied.

"I'm sorry she's dead, then," said her husband almost gruffly.

"My father wired for me to come to her sick-bed, because she wanted to see me when she was ill," said Anna at this point of vantage. "But I didn't go because of my speeches this week."

"That's the only thing to do," John responded, not at all impressed with her sacrifice. "The cause before the family—that's the only way!"

"Will you let me go with you to Readham and the other towns?" asked Anna without further prelude.

"No," said John with an air of finality. "Not now."

"So you're going to tour the state," said Anna, piqued, "and let your wife sit at home and darn your socks."

"You'll have your hands full writing out the news I'll send you for Kovalsky's paper. You'll get it red-hot from me. I won't give it to anyone else on the *Brotherhood*——"

"What a compensation!" Anna remarked peevishly.

DAILY BREAD

"I'll come home just as often as I can between the towns," her husband went on. "We'll have our own tenement then. Besides, we couldn't afford to keep that and both of us travel, too."

Anna was on the point of declaring that she could dispense with the cheers of a tenement, when she remembered the gruff wistfulness with which he had spoken of their "home." Perhaps, after all, this iron labor-leader deserved something like a hearth where he could rest from the battle-cries of the cause.

"Let's go to bed!" she said with a sigh of resignation.

She could not write the condolence letter to her father now—no, not until John had gone out in the morning!

"I promise you one thing, though," said John, and his tone was less stern but none the less earnest.

"What could that be?" asked Anna languidly.

"Whenever there's going to be a big strike—a long strike like the one in Waterborough, I'll call for you and you must come and help me again."

"I'll remember that!" said Anna, somewhat reconciled. And that night she slept a deep, dreamless sleep far into Sunday morning.

On Monday morning, however, she rose when it was still dark outside and escorted her husband to the train, not without fresh pangs of envy. For John was going away to fight for a cause, but she was going to stay and furnish a shabby tenement. The prospect not only of cooking all the meals, but of starting the fire early in the morning, of washing the dishes, sweeping and scrubbing made her shudder, for now she could not engage a willing Nettie, as in her independent factory days, without John's disapproval.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

With the help of Olga Kovalsky, who knew the sources of cheap furniture and the bargains in kitchen utensils, the tenement was furnished with the austerity required by the combined salaries of a labor-leader and a revolutionary journalist. The only decoration on the wall was a red banner with "The Toilers' Brotherhood" in black letters; the only literature, piles of newspapers and pamphlets. But, after all, the advantages of this bare two-room tenement was its very smallness, for Anna found that the house-work which she had dreaded was completed sooner than she had expected, and there was ample time left for writing and for sleep.

In fact, the weariness that had been weighing her down was gradually vanishing, and after a week of uneventful routine Anna had found her old strength again. The news, to be sure, that John sent her from Readham and which she wrote out in the richest colors possible for the *Brotherhood* was anything but uneventful. For John had been organizing a great strike and several mills were shutting down; there had even been some small riots, though none to compare with the scenes in Waterborough. Nevertheless, though she was the bearer of stirring news which she always knew even before the editor Kovalsky himself, Anna could not help realizing that the hand on her kitchen-clock was crawling from one hour to the other while in her sober living-room kitchen nothing had happened to mark even the slowest passage of time.

To be sure, Mrs. Jennings, her nearest neighbor, had dropped in this morning to see how Anna was "gittin' on" and she might come in again any minute. There was a knock and Mrs. Jennings' head with the

DAILY BREAD

smooth, oily black hair brushed away from her forehead popped in at the door.

"How d'ye do, Mrs. Bruce?"

"Oh, how do you do, Mrs. Jennings?"

The neighbor came in with a black-haired, beady-eyed, dirty baby in her arms.

"I brought him along," she explained. "I knew you wouldn't mind; he's always gittin' into mischief when I let him alone. He spoiled my bread the other night. He was crawlin' round an' stuck his finger into the dough when it was hardly ris'. Have you got your bread made?"

"I'm not making my own bread," Anna confessed.

"Oh, you get it from the baker's? Ain't you the lazy missus!" And Mrs. Jennings went on in a tone of indulgence: "Well, of course, when you're all for yerself, it really don't pay to go through all the trouble of makin' the bread, when you only want a little for yerself. Of course, I forgot your husband was away all the time. It ain't like a family of six, where somebody's always hungry. My oldest boy Jim—I tell him he'll eat up his boots next."

Such was Anna's neighbor! Her calls became more and more frequent, till Anna realized with a sudden horror that there was no escape from Mrs. Jennings. If, to flee from her, Anna would spend more and more time at the Kovalskys and at the headquarters of the Brotherhood where she could talk of John's doings, of strikes, of the cause, then Mrs. Jennings would be sure to "drop in" when Anna was washing her dishes at night or—much worse—when she had settled down in her one rocking-chair to write an inspired article for Kovalsky. The little Jennings—Jimmy, Tommy, Lizzy and the rest

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

—Anna did not mind, for they were content with an apple or a penny stick of candy and did not exact conversation.

Then there was Mrs. Polowsky, the old, rheumatic, Polish woman who would come hobbling into Anna's kitchen on her stick and sink breathless into the rocking-chair in front of the stove.

"Did you hear the news?" she asked Anna one afternoon.

"What news?" asked Anna languidly, for news with her neighbors meant gossip.

"Mrs. Rassowitch has driven her husband to drink!"

"Oh, dear!" replied Anna. "How did that happen?"

Mrs. Rassowitch, stout and florid, took in washing in the tenement below Anna's.

"Well," Mrs. Polowsky explained gladly. "She just kept treatin' him so bad. When he comes home from work, just dead tired, and asks her: 'Is supper ready, Jane?' she gives him a punch an' hollers: 'Can't you wait, you greedy pig?' An' before he goes off at six in the mornin', she makes him lug up the coal an' start the fire——"

"So he's drinking in despair, is he?" asked Anna.

"Yes, he came home dead drunk last night; Lottie Levinsky told me so."

Then Anna, ceasing to listen, would merely nod and intersperse "Ohs!" and "Is that sos!" till old Madame Polowsky had hobbled away again. How different were these stories of the neighbors from the pitiful tales of hardship and grief that the strikers' wives had told in Waterborough!

John had been away almost two weeks, when a postal-card came from him saying that the employers had

DAILY BREAD

granted the demands of the strikers, who were going back to work, and that he would be back Saturday night for over Sunday at least. Only over Sunday! Would he go off again and leave her to Mrs. Jennings and Mrs. Polowsky?

On Saturday night—a cold, rainy night in early March—Anna was turning the leg of mutton over in the pot and watching the clock nervously. John must be here any minute! The potatoes were boiling cheerily, the room was warm, the lamp shining brightly. What more hospitality could she offer?

She heard his heavy footsteps on the corridor, and flew to the door.

"Oh, John—at last!" she cried. "How I have missed you!"

"Wife!" cried John, and embraced her with a violence that startled Anna.

His face was rough, unshaven, his hair shaggy, his coat moist from the rain, yet through her husband's return Anna felt waked back into life after two weeks of queer, petty dreams. John, on his part, seemed dazzled and enchanted by the light of the lamp and the warmth of the stove.

"We've got a fine home, Anna!" he said rubbing his hands; and Anna smiled.

She made him sit down at the one table, and brought him the steaming mutton and potatoes.

"Tell me everything!" said Anna eagerly, when they were eating together.

"You know everything," John replied. "I've kept you posted. There isn't any more to tell."

"But what about those new strikes?" Anna asked, greedy for excitement.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"Oh, they're breaking out all over the state," John replied. "There's been a walkout of a thousand at the cotton mills in Redford—I've got to go there to-morrow night to be on hand early Monday morning."

"To-morrow night!" cried Anna. "When you've only just come!"

"I can't help it," said her husband. "I'd like to stay here, I'm sure"—he looked admiringly round the kitchen—"but I've got to go and hold the men together. They don't understand each other—there was a grand mix-up when I got to Readham; the Poles were fighting the Italians, and the Lithuanians had no interpreter—well, we've won just the same! They're ready to strike in six towns now; I've got to steer everyone of them next week——"

"Take me along!" cried Anna with shining eyes. John Bruce shook his head.

"It'll be one grand rush from one place to the next," he said. "You couldn't do it, Anna."

Because it was his first night at home after two hard weeks, Anna did not want to spoil it by disputing, so she let him have his way. She saw, too, that her husband, in spite of his iron strength, was tired and burdened with his heavy cares; so she did not trouble him with further questions that night.

The next day—a cool, windy Sunday—Paul Riley, the secretary-treasurer of the Brotherhood, came to talk over the pending situation in the mill-towns with John, and while Anna cooked the dinner, her mind was picketing in front of cotton mills, parading through town squares with red flags and the martial band, hearing pistol-shots and seeing the flash of bayonets. Paul Riley, with his shrewd gray eyes and square chin, and her great stern

DAILY BREAD

husband were raising their rough hands against the smug oppressors, and behind them, like ignorant, fearful children, clamored the mob!

There was only one day with heroes, however, for Anna, because John left her in the evening at six.

"Come back soon!" she cried. "And don't—don't shoot first!"

For some of the black shadows that had darkened her spirit at the time of the funeral march were once more lurking in the depths of her soul. After all, her husband was going off to battle!

"I won't do anything rash," said John Bruce. "You can be sure of that. I'll keep you posted. Make good stories of the news and, when you see reporters for other papers, don't spare details in our favor. Good-bye! When I come back, I'll come with a few victories more!"

"Good-bye, John!"

Anna sighed; this was her life! Her husband went away to his giant task, and she was staying back to wash the breakfast dishes and hear the rattling talk of Mrs. Jennings. And she felt a dull foreboding that, unless something unexpected happened, her life would continue to drag on thus in its petty path, for John, in his race from one striking town to another, would not stop to call for her services any more, and the days of their joint leadership were over.

"Your husband gone so soon! Where did he go?" Mrs. Jennings' florid head peeped in at the door. Ah, there it was incarnate—her life!

Anna soon heard from John that the mills in Redford had given in without much trouble, and that he was now on the way to Cranfield, where he expected more resistance. All his letters might as well have been ad-

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

dressed to Kovalsky as to herself, so terse were they and so confined to fact. Her task it was to embroider the brief news for the columns of the *Brotherhood*.

As the weeks passed on and Anna had received and repeated news of one victory more or less arduous after another, it seemed to her as if the deeds of the Brotherhood, that great force to which she had pledged her life, were growing chimerical; but the potatoes in her kitchen and the gossip of Mrs. Jennings, Mrs. Rassowitch and Mrs. Polowsky were undeniably real. After all, when Anna was not seeking the Kovalskys or Paul Riley and his companions at their headquarters, she never heard anyone speak of the Brotherhood. Her neighbors talked with passion about the price of eggs and the intolerably high price of pork, but of the Brotherhood they had never heard. And the Brotherhood, with all its victories, had not yet lowered the price of pork!

So Anna's starved soul would yearn for her husband's fleeting stops at home, that it might feast on bold ideas and heroic deeds. But each time that John came back, he was tired after tense exertions and silent with his wife after lavishing his eloquence on mobs.

"I told you everything in my letters," he would answer her wistful questions; and by "letters" he meant the condensed pieces of news that she used for her journalism. Sometimes it seemed as if her husband only came home to be fed, but she did not complain because, after all, his spirit that belonged to the people must not be tarnished; but what did it matter if hers were radiant, or gloomy and dull? Ah, the bitterness of it! To have stood before throngs with a banner, and then to sink into this obscurity!

In these weeks Anna smiled less and less when Mrs.

DAILY BREAD

Crane, the meek, little, white creature, and Kate, still resigned and suffering, regardless of the Toilers' victories, remarked with puzzled faces as they had done so often:

"I never could see why you went into this kind of thing at all. Just think of the life you might be livin' all this time!"

Then it was that Anna had a vision of her father brooding in his library, all alone in the great empty house, while she was peeling potatoes in her living-room kitchen, hoping that her silent husband might soon come home. What a life she might be living! The thought made her dizzy.

All the while a mighty longing grew within her, a craving for beautiful books—warm, fragrant, gaily colored books, novels of sparkling life, poetry of exquisite moods, graceful, spirited comedies, short-stories, brilliant and smooth like jewels. To Anna, who within the last three months had read nothing but newspapers and revolutionary tracts, the world of *belles-lettres* was a fairy-land that dazzled her and benumbed her, something as a grove of fragrant orange-blossoms benumbs a wayfarer from the north. Through the halls of the great, white public library Anna walked reverently as through a temple and yet with a lurking sense of wrong. For she did not read the works on "Capital and Labor," on "Factory Laws in New York," on "Syndicalism in France" and the others that she had first intended to study, but sucked the beauty of which she had so long deprived her soul out of absorbing novels of society life, charming short stories that showed her delicate bits of life in finely wrought frames, and her favorite poetry. The hours spent in the reading-rooms were hours of oblivion,

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

hours of a life not her own. Then when Anna would walk home with two or three new novels in her arm, past glaring theaters and moving-picture shows, she would wonder why the poor ravenous frequenters of "movies," instead of spending their painfully earned cents to seek thrills in a dense, crowded theater, did not rather carry home for nothing any precious book from the storehouse of wonders. And yet, after all, she would like to hear a good play at the theater once more—just once! And music—music!

To Anna's alarm, it was clearer and clearer in her mind that the more she read, the less she looked forward to her husband's home-coming. She was now living in a sparkling world of repartee, of witty allusions, of ornamental passions; her mind, as it were, was treading on oriental rugs, dancing on polished floors, and lounging on bright silk cushions. The last time that John had come back—only for a day—she had not let him suspect the luxurious freight of her mind, nor had he been at all curious about her lonely days. Nevertheless, Anna had a mysterious sense of guilt.

To-morrow John was expected here to consult with Paul Riley about the prospect of aid from New York for prolonging the latest strike at Jamestown. Anna, as usual, scrubbed her floors and polished the stove as a welcome to her husband and found herself wishing in the underground darkness of her heart that he were not coming home just now.

But he came, late at night, and his eye was sterner, his brow more sinister than ever before.

"It's good to come home," he said, stepping into the kitchen, and his face lit up for a moment as he kissed her with his usual brusque tenderness. "But I can't stay

DAILY BREAD

long. The mill men are mighty stubborn over there, and I tell you, Anna, they've brought in a damned lot of scabs——"

Scabs? Yes, of course, that was disgraceful! But Anna could not force any indignation, so completely had she glided away into that other fragrant world.

"That's mean!" she uttered finally in a bland voice.

All the night after John's return, she could hardly sleep at all, so loud did her heart beat, as if it were the heart of a traitor. And yet—what had she done?

The next morning, after the frugal breakfast, John went directly as usual to the headquarters and left Anna alone till dinner-time. There was no reason why, after the dishes were washed and the two rooms dusted, she should not go on with the novel that she had begun before John came back. It was not a good novel—the adventures of a New York heiress at the court of St. James—but it held some capricious dialogue and it reminded Anna of scenes long past, like bits of colored glass from a broken precious vase found on a bare and dusty floor.

When it was time to broil the pork chops for the noon dinner, Anna laid the open book beside the sink and, with a knife in one hand and a dripping fork in the other, she bent over the compelling pages till it was time to turn over a chop.

"What are you reading?" John had come in, and she had not even noticed his heavy footsteps, so absorbed had she been in the flirtation of the heroine with the witty and arrogant young lord.

"Just a book I got from the library," said Anna meekly, and devoted herself quite to the chops.

John, meanwhile, took up the book, looked through it,

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

gazed at the illustrations, stopped here and there to read a passage, then closed it—there was no bookmark in it, either—and threw it down.

"Why do you waste your time with that stuff?" he challenged, like an angry schoolmaster.

"Stuff!" A volcano was breaking out in Anna's soul, one that had been rumbling now for weeks.

"Stuff!" she cried. "Can't I read the books I like, even if they aren't up to your good taste?"

Anna's irony did not escape her husband, in whose stern eyes there flashed a hostile gleam.

"I'm not pretending to have good taste," he said hoarsely. "Taste isn't in my line; my job is to help the workers and their cause, and that isn't a matter of taste. We can't afford it—we haven't got the time! It's the man that has robbed the worker of his bread can sit down and shut his eyes to the filth he don't want to see and have good taste——"

"It's easy enough for you to talk like that!" Anna cried passionately. "You go off and have all the excitement and glory of your everlasting cause, and I've got to stay home and cook your dinner!"

"I didn't take you with me," said John with his stern, judicious air, "because I knew you couldn't stand it, because——"

"Because you didn't want me!" Anna interrupted. "And it's just as well; I couldn't live up to your lofty standard——"

"I thought you'd be safer in a home like this——" said John.

"Home!" Anna echoed, and laughed bitterly, a loud, ringing laugh. "Did you ever grasp, John Bruce, what I have given up for you?"

DAILY BREAD

John stared at Anna with the sinister, piercing look that had made her tremble when she saw him for the first time.

"What is it?" she gasped, for the look crept through her like a chill.

"I was right," he said gruffly, looking past her as if he were talking to himself. "When I first saw you I was afraid some day you would be my bad angel——"

"Ungrateful man!" cried Anna, wounded, and ran into the bedroom, where she slammed the door in rage.

After a few minutes, however, she came back to give John his dinner, and they ate hurriedly in silence. The vulgar routine of daily life rolled on by its own ceaseless force, whether hearts broke on the way or not!

"I got a wire from Jamestown this morning," said John. "They need me: I think I'd better take the next train back. You know the news for the *Brotherhood*. I'll send you a post-card to-night!"

He looked at the clock, then took his hat from the hook on the wall.

"Good-bye!" he said gruffly.

"Good-bye!" Anna echoed blandly, and when the door had closed behind her husband, she wanted to scream.

But instead she stared round her, at the stove, the table with the disorderly dishes, the sink where the book lay that John had thrown down, and all at once this home of hers seemed foreign, as if she had just strayed into a strange, ugly place.

"Why am I here?" she cried aloud, and the blank walls were formidable in the silence.

Then her eyes fell on a number of the *Brotherhood* that lay on the rocking-chair in a corner. She had been so absorbed in her novel for the last two days that she

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

had forgotten to write the incendiary article that she had promised to give Kovalsky to-night. Anna shuddered at the thought of writing that article now, and the very word Brotherhood mocked her like a grimacing mouth that cried "liar" in her face. But Kovalsky was waiting for her work, and, after all, what did one bitter draught more matter in the cup that she had to drink?

So Anna quickly cleared the table, then sat down to write mechanically in a large, desperate hand:

"We Toilers must not forget that we, the robbed, the oppressed, are the makers of the world——"

CHAPTER XII

THE OLD GLAMOUR

ANNA was sitting by her open kitchen window in the mild April breeze, reading the newspaper. Impatiently she turned away from the strike at Jamestown, which was growing alarmingly under the leadership of John Bruce, to the reflections of the more peaceful world.

"Farewell Banquet, to be given in honor of the Austrian Ambassador——" Welcome signs of a fragrant land from which she was exiled! Eagerly Anna read the list of distinguished guests who were expected at the Plaza Hotel next Tuesday from Washington and all parts of the country.

On account of the absence of the English Ambassador, Great Britain will be represented by the First Secretary of the Embassy, Mr. Kenneth Holcombe . . .

Kenneth! The paper fell out of Anna's hands. Kenneth here, perhaps this very moment in New York! The sight of his name had opened the floodgates for span-gled memories, the old glamour was luring her back—back where? To Kenneth's world! Anna's eyes filled with tears, she stretched out her arms as if she would hold fast an elusive vision, and she strayed back and forth in the room, driven by a boundless longing.

Only one idea was clear in this torrent of hopes and memories: that she would see Kenneth at any price! Several times she read the description of the coming

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

banquet in the Plaza Hotel, as if it were a puzzle, bound to solve the problem of her access to this assembly. If she could only be Anna Borden again, instead of the impossible Mrs. John Bruce!

A ticket to the gallery as reporter seemed to be the nearest solution that she could ponder out, and yet from whom could a reporter for the *Brotherhood* obtain a ticket for an exclusive diplomatic festivity? It was impossible! Then all at once there arose in her mind the nondescript placid face of a certain Mr. Johnson, a reporter for a popular newspaper, who had often come to the Brotherhood headquarters for news and had looked at her with a curious air. Mr. Johnson she would persuade to procure for her a reporter's ticket to the banquet, and she would lose no time in telling Paul Riley at the headquarters to call this reporter, under the pretense that she had to give him some important news.

Mr. Johnson looked not a little surprised when the next day Anna asked him in a low voice, so that Paul Riley and the other men in the small office would not hear her, if he were going to the farewell banquet for the Austrian Ambassador. No, Mr. Johnson was the reporter for labor affairs, but he knew a colleague who went to those things. Then Anna begged him to procure a ticket for her either through his colleague or through the editor of his paper, or in any way—she did not care how.

Mr. Johnson looked at her with ill hidden suspicion. "Now, Mrs. Bruce," he said with a lofty smile, "I wonder why you should want to go to this dinner!"

"I want to see so many famous people together," said Anna desperately. "I want to hear the speeches. I want to hear speeches by some one besides my husband."

THE OLD GLAMOUR

"You can go to the suffrage meeting to-night for that——" suggested Mr. Johnson.

"No, I have set my heart on seeing this banquet," Anna persisted, indifferent to what Mr. Johnson might think.

"I wouldn't risk getting a ticket for you," said the impertinent reporter. "I wouldn't take the responsibility."

"Do you think I want to throw a bomb at the Austrian Ambassador?" Anna cried out with a sneer.

Mr. Johnson shrugged his shoulders and smiled mysteriously.

"Oh, very well, I won't trouble you!" Anna broke off the interview. "Thank you for coming."

She turned her back on Mr. Johnson and rushed out of the office. She did not care what the men at the headquarters were saying about her now; she cared about nothing at all but the one question, how to see Kenneth!

Back in the kitchen she brooded over this problem with a throbbing intensity, as if she were plotting to save a life. And indeed, to Anna it meant the saving of a life, the chilled life of her spirit that had been groping its way through books and fantasies to the warmth and fragrance of the lost world. She must see Kenneth: she had surmised him in the novels, the poetry, in the meditations of her heart. She had a right to see him, lonely as she was, burdened with housework that was growing loathsome and journalism that was a torment and a lie. She had no refuge here in this zone where the flowers of the spirit were frozen. Paul Riley, the Kovalskys, the Cranes wearied her, and only Ruth understood the language of Anna's "delectable moun-

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

tains." But Ruth lived with a respectable aunt whom Anna had never cared to shock with the story of her life, and besides she could not make up her mind to usher the friend of her careless youth into her kitchen, much less to sun herself in the genteel prosperity of the aunt. So her intercourse with Ruth had been limited to calls at the Home for Destitute Children, and to Anna these had seemed overshadowed by an air of reproach that emanated from Ruth, because Anna had refused to join in her work.

All in all, she was quite alone. Who knew when John would come back, now that more and more mills were shutting down in Jamestown, and the strikers were growing riotous, almost as in the days of Waterborough? Anna shuddered. Those days were in the remote past, far more remote than the easeful, peaceful days of repartee and epigrams with the young English diplomat, which like smoldering embers suddenly ablaze, were heating and lighting up her frozen soul. Let John Bruce stay away; he did not belong to her!

As there was no possible access to the banquet, Anna determined to dine in the Plaza Hotel—why not?—while the banquet was going on, and then to send for Kenneth as soon as it should be over. When the decision was made, Anna danced and capered about the kitchen. Only two days more and she would see Kenneth face to face! Beyond that she did not want to think, only she must see him, speak to him with festive lights, gay voices and music round about!

When the first turmoil of joy was over, it occurred to Anna that she was living on a part of two meager salaries which would never provide her with the beautiful gown in which she must meet Kenneth, with the cab in

THE OLD GLAMOUR

which, like Cinderella, she must drive back to her kitchen! Her year's income she had given to the Toilers' Brotherhood. Ah, but there was still the capital—the cursed capital!—which by prudence, called cowardice at the time, she had saved that she might remain free to give. But she was free to keep it, too, and it was time that this gloomy farce of poverty should end! Without further delay she wrote to her banker in Boston to send her a sum that could be turned into a fit background for meetings with Kenneth.

Gleeful like a child that has been given a penny to buy candy, Anna searched in Fifth Avenue shops for her beautiful gown, and blushed when she gave her address. An evening coat she bought, too, a scarf and all the accessories, and when she came back laden with parcels to her tenement, to cook her dinner by force of habit, she laughed aloud.

"What's the joke?" asked Mrs. Jennings at the door. Oh, the pursuing gossip!

"Nothing!" Anna replied. "I was just laughing because the weather's so fine!"

It would not do, after all, to keep a servant, as she had planned on the way home, because she would never rest from the consternation of the neighbors. Besides, John Bruce might come home! If he should come the night of the banquet——!

But when the night of the banquet came, John remained away, as he should, and Anna reveled by candlelight in front of her little mirror, in the shining rose tint and the smooth texture of the silk that was turning her from Anna Bruce back to Anna Borden. She pirouetted up and down the kitchen in her new high-heeled bronze slippers and draped the black lace scarf round her shoul-

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

ders as if she were rehearsing for a play: it was so long since she had worn anything but a dark working dress!

Anna took the car uptown, then a cab at a street corner, and with a throbbing heart skipped out when the cab door was opened, and walked into the warm, perfumed hotel.

Glistening gowns, jewels, murmuring voices, short laughs—it was all so unexpectedly familiar! Was she living here with her father and waiting for him that they might go into the banquet together? Had she left Kenneth last night at her cab door, after the opera?

It was a little embarrassing to dine alone, when there were parties buzzing round about and several curious eyes watching her—all alone, just a young girl—Ah, no, she had forgotten: not a young girl at all, but a woman with a wild, eccentric past!

The after-dinner speeches must be over at about eleven o'clock. Till then Anna lounged in different writing rooms, idly looking through magazines and studying the coiffures of the women who were busily writing notes. Her heart was throbbing no longer here in the warm, perfumed air and the restful light. Here she was waiting leisurely for her charming cavalier.

Toward eleven o'clock Anna had a boy sent from the office to look for Mr. Holcombe and tell him that a lady was waiting for him in the reception room near the banquet hall. Several long minutes elapsed, during which Anna paced up and down the room and reveled in her rare suspense. He was coming, surely, if not in this moment, then in the next; for he had never failed her.

He was coming—

"Kenneth!" she cried, and her heart was leaping gaily as she looked up at his astonished but radiant face.

THE OLD GLAMOUR

"Anna Borden!" Kenneth exclaimed slowly, as if he were trying to make the name fit his apparition.

"For auld lang syne," said Anna merrily. "I wanted to have a glimpse of you once more."

"How are you—where have you been all this time?" asked Kenneth, not without a slight reserve that seemed to check his exuberance of the first moment: no doubt, he had their parting in mind.

"Oh, that is too long a story," said Anna, shrugging her shoulders, and beckoned him to sit down beside her on a sofa in the corner of the room.

"You must know, however," Anna went on lightly, "that I am Mrs. John Bruce now."

"Indeed!" Kenneth bowed slightly, as if he had been introduced to a newcomer, and a shadow seemed to pass over his bright face and linger in his light blue eyes. "Is your husband here to-night?"

"No—he is out of town," said Anna, and she felt, with an adventurous thrill, as if she were walking on thin ice—walking the perilous way from her husband to Kenneth. "And I am sorry that I can't even invite you to our home, because we have only a temporary apartment here in New York, and that is not very alluring. But you"—Anna breathed a sigh of relief when the most dangerous point was passed. "My congratulations and welcome in Washington. When will you be 'Your Excellency'?"

"I was very eager to come to the States, you can imagine," Kenneth replied with a subdued gallantry in his tone that did not escape Anna's ear.

"And have you a charming wife, whom I could call on?" asked Anna gaily, for her gaiety would not forsake her, even though she somewhat dreaded his answer.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

But Kenneth's youthful blue eyes were serious.

"I have stayed faithful," he replied.

"Faithful?" Anna echoed, and smiled wistfully. "Faithful—that's more virtue than required!"

"It is not a virtue with me," he said gravely. "It is the only possibility."

Anna felt once more a long unaccustomed happiness, the joy of being gracefully admired.

"Even though things have changed since our Berlin days, Kenneth," said Anna cheerfully, "I hope we shall see each other often while you are in New York."

"I shall be here a few days only," said Kenneth eagerly. "May I—will you lunch with me to-morrow?"

Kenneth spoke with a strange hopefulness that made Anna wonder, till it occurred to her that this meeting with him was not a conventional event. Nevertheless, she assented cheerfully, thankful for occasions to spin the thread of her life back into the glistening web that had been so harshly torn.

Then with a desperate understanding that she must suck the honey out of these moments while they lasted, Anna inquired about their common friends at the Embassy in Berlin, about promotions, about his summer at Karlsbad and all the harmless, graceful international gossip that allured her like waltz music sounding from a distance.

"And Mrs. Hamilton, the sunflower?" asked Kenneth, tranquilly reminiscent.

"The sunflower has kept her head turned toward the sun and so has overlooked me in the shade," said Anna, laughing, with a shrug of her shoulder.

Anna wondered at her own flippancy, and yet it was

THE OLD GLAMOUR

natural for, although she knew all the while that her gala bark was floating on foam, she felt so joyfully at ease with her young diplomat!

The clock struck twelve, and Cinderella jumped up. When Kenneth accompanied her to the cab, she gave the cabman a fictitious number on Fifth Avenue, then waved her hand to Kenneth and cried:

"To-morrow at one! For auld lang syne!"

How fearlessly, how gaily she could talk to him, as she had never spoken to her husband! Yet if Kenneth knew that she was leaving the cab in the middle of Fifth Avenue and taking a car to her obscure home, so as not to wake her neighbor by an arrival in a taxi, if he knew that she was groping up dark narrow stairs to her bare, two-room tenement, how would the youthful blue eyes of the First Secretary of the English Embassy open wide in horror!

That night passed in an exquisite sleep, studded with glistening dreams, and the harsh awakening in the dull, gray room seemed unreal, like a nightmare. And now she had to start the fire and boil the water for her tea! Oh, Kenneth, if it were only one o'clock! Yet she had to make the most of the morning in buying a suit and hat for the meeting at one with Kenneth and expanding her wardrobe for meetings that might follow. And all the while it seemed as if she were searching costumes for a masquerade, only that it was hard to tell which was the real life and which the disguise.

At one o'clock, however, all the doubleness of her life was melted in the beauty of the moment when she sat opposite Kenneth at a little table in a wide, low room, sparsely peopled, and fragrant with the heavy scent from bouquets of hyacinths.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"You must miss your music in Washington!" Anna was saying.

"Oh, yes," replied Kenneth, "I have to wait much too long for the symphonies——"

Ah, then Anna was safely launched on the smooth, cool sea of music and art, away from the grimy shore of the life that she wanted to hide. Some of the books that she had been reading during her last weeks of longing Kenneth had read, too, and it was a joy to draw them out of the storeroom of her memory into the light.

All the while in the background of her mind Anna was applauding Kenneth for his discretion: not once had he asked about her husband, about her life in New York, nor by a syllable betrayed his curiosity. How easeful was such discourse with an artist in the game of life, how like balm after the blunt, unsparing manner of her husband! Could it stay like this always? To be sure, she missed about Kenneth the frank ardor of his courtship that had gilded the meetings in Berlin and which was now turned into a careful reserve. But he was faithful! His love, though unconfessed, told in the brightness of his glance and the eagerness with which he listened to every word that she uttered.

Unfortunately, he had to return to Washington to-morrow afternoon.

"Oh, then I shan't see you any more," said Anna, in open disappointment.

Kenneth raised his eyebrows, gladly astonished.

"There's still to-morrow!" he said, with the air of begging a favor. "May I hope—will you repeat this to-morrow? I don't know how much I am presuming——"

Anna felt that she must seem to hesitate, although

THE OLD GLAMOUR

there was not an instant's wavering in her mind; so she smiled an enigmatic smile before she answered:

"To-morrow—let me see—no, I have no engagement. It is such a pleasure to hear echoes of Berlin! I must go to a tea a few blocks up the avenue now—no, you had better leave me here—— To-morrow again at the same hour? Very well. Good-bye—for auld lang syne."

As Anna walked through Central Park to her tea-party in the air, she breathed in the mild spring fragrance and delighted in the budding shrubbery and the robins on the grass. On and on she walked, in too festive a mood to go back to her dreary hole, while her thoughts were still conversing gaily with Kenneth. She would have liked to wander on through the park in the afternoon sunshine without stay, till by a miraculous speeding up of the slow time it would suddenly be one o'clock to-morrow before nightfall. But, instead, she had to go home at dusk and write out the latest news of the Jamestown strike for the impatient Kovalsky. Was there a more loathsome task than this bombastic journalism?

The next day at one Anna walked up the steps to the Plaza Hotel with a little heavier heart, for in the dreariness of the night shadowy surmises had grinned at her with ugly goblin faces. Could they laugh and banter on forever? If Kenneth went to Washington to-day, when would he come to New York again, and then would not John Bruce be an iron barrier? If Kenneth knew—— Oh, she could not bear to think of such a tarnish on their golden hours!

Their discourse to-day did not bubble as gaily as yesterday, and once in a while there was a silence—not an

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

empty pause, but a silence fraught with an uneasy suspense.

"You are contemplative to-day," said Anna lightly, though she felt strangled within.

"So are you, Anna!" said Kenneth. "Because I cannot suppose that you should only be reflecting my mood."

"Oh, why not?" Anna replied, with a shrug of her shoulders. "But I suppose moods just happen like a solar eclipse, and affect more than one."

"Just happen?" Kenneth repeated thoughtfully. "No, I doubt that. Nothing, I believe, just happens! Neither is this a solar eclipse; it is more a kind of fog, a thick mist——"

"Oh, a mist!" Anna again used her enigmatic smile, this time to hide a throng of alarming guesses that were surging up from the depth of her spirit. "Don't you think, my dear æsthete, that mist enhances a landscape, blurs the harsh outlines, veils everything ugly and spreads an even film of beauty?"

Anna was happy while she spoke, for she could not talk to her husband in gay abandon. But when her own voice ceased, the silence startled her, because, in spite of all her desperate gaiety, it was a grave silence.

"If I came here again from Washington in the course of the next two months," Kenneth began slowly, carefully, "would you let me see you again—in this way?"

Anna smiled, sphinx-like.

"In this way," she said cheerfully, "or in any other pleasant way that happens to offer itself."

Kenneth was obviously waiting for some apologetic remark about her home and her husband, and Anna, who had felt so exuberantly at ease, was suddenly at a loss for something to say.

THE OLD GLAMOUR

"These days have been like a glimpse of good old times for me," escaped her lips at last, and she could have bitten her tell-tale tongue.

Kenneth started and looked at her with a curious, alert glance.

"Confess!" he said all at once. "Confess that you are unhappy."

Anna blushed. How easy, how not without pathetic charm it would be to confess that she was unhappy, if she only were unhappy with an ambassador, a lawyer, or a banker! But with John——!

"I don't want to annoy you," said Kenneth kindly. "I only thought that you might find an old friend useful, as you say, for auld lang syne!"

"Oh, Kenneth!" Anna sighed, and looked at him lingeringly, unwilling to part from her secret.

The room where they sat at a little table was now almost empty, only a few subdued voices sounded from a remote corner, and the muffled footsteps of the waiters.

"I, too, have been unhappy, you know," said Kenneth, with that reserved gallantry in his tone which made the wistful tears rush to her eyes.

"I can't tell you now!" she said, in a veiled voice. "It would be too hard—you couldn't grasp it now all at once!"

"Oh!——" Kenneth insisted no further. "But I shall see you again?"

If he only knew! Or if he only never needed to know! But this fragile intermittent state between the safe not-knowing and the all too dangerous knowing was making her spirit bleed!

"I will write you everything!" she said at last. "I

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

will write you the story of my life since that last day on the steamer. Then you can decide for yourself whether you will ever see me again or not!"

There was a humble strain in these words which shocked Anna as soon as she had uttered them. How could she hint that he might not want to see her again?

"And now do not think of me as a moping, unhappy soul!" she cried, shaking off the heavy dust on the wings of her lithe spirit. "Think of me laughing and bantering—promise me that!"

"I will think of you every day," said Kenneth, in the tone she loved so well. "That is all I can promise."

This seemed to Anna the time to part, before any unpremeditated confession of hers should cloud their meeting. Kenneth's card with his Washington address she put inside her glove, shuddering at the obligation this slight piece of cardboard imposed on her.

"Good-bye!" she said, and smiled her enigmatic smile—for the last time, sphinx-like, alas!—and added, with a bitter, wistful intonation: "*Au revoir!*"

Back in her tenement, Anna stood at her kitchen window and mused, unwilling to read the post-card from her husband, unwilling to see Mrs. Kovalsky, whom she had promised to visit to-day, unwilling to live except in a reverie, till Kenneth should come again. She did not write the letter of confession to-day, lest a cold reply should spoil her reverie too soon—this sparkling train of visions half reminiscent, half imagined, yet all, though they were visions, far brighter than the gray walls of her tenement and the dirty street outside.

But the night of the following day she wrote the letter by the light of her kerosene lamp, the ten-page letter that

THE OLD GLAMOUR

seemed to her, when she read it over, like one long, elaborate apology for her marriage. Could Anna Borden write such a letter? No, it was Anna Bruce who mourned for the death of the haughty, high-spirited Anna Borden! Ought she to tear up this letter and write another, a short, objective account? Oh, no, she could not make the effort again, and, besides, this was the letter that she really meant for Kenneth's eyes!

When the letter, heavy with fate, had dropped into the letter-box, Anna reckoned out when the soonest possible answer from Kenneth could reach her, and till the morning when it was due she moved in a trance.

"You seem changed," said Mrs. Polowski, the little, invalid gossip who invited herself to Anna's rocking-chair. "Sort of queer like. Is it because you miss your husband so much?"

"It's spring fever, Mrs. Polowski," said Anna, and peeled the potatoes without saying another word, while the waterfall of Mrs. Polowski's eloquence poured over her unchecked.

Thus the routine drudgery, with its petty distractions, went on automatically. But the morning came when she expected Kenneth's prompt reply, and she ran down the stairs to meet the postman.

"A registered letter for you, 'm!"

From Kenneth that was—oh, the burning suspense!

When she had signed her name, the postman handed her another letter, one from her husband, instead of the usual news-giving postal-card. Anna wondered what this change could mean, but only for an instant, so much greater was her wonder what Kenneth had written.

In her kitchen she threw John's letter on the table and tore open the one from Kenneth and read:

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

DEAR ANNA:

With grief and pity I read the letter which has lifted the veil at last that obscured your true face from my sight. But it is none the less beautiful now! Believe me, I shall always think of you as the charming, noble Anna whom I know, and what others have called you concerns me not at all. I wish that it were in my power to free you from a tedious bond, the price—forgive me!—of a too rash fanatic whim.

In a letter I will say no more, and far be it from me to reproach you! But you know where my heart has lingered since the day on the steamer.

I shall try to beg a few days off in the course of the next three weeks, so that I may see you again in New York. Write to me often, for every letter shall be treasured.

Most devotedly your friend,

KENNETH HOLCOMBE.

Tears of glad relief dropped on the letter and blurred Kenneth's name. So her old world with its fragrance was open to her once more, for, even though she lived on in her dreary confinement, she would always hold this letter, the key to her earthly "Paradise Regained." And Kenneth would come again soon!

The big letter from John in his clumsy, scrawling hand glared hideously beside the precious talisman in her hand, and it was with some reluctance that she opened it to read:

Come and join me in Jamestown. The strike is going to last several weeks longer. Tell Kovalsky. Take the seven o'clock train to-morrow. I'll meet you.

I told you I would call you when the time came.

JOHN BRUCE.

Anna flung the letter on the floor.

"Take the seven o'clock train!" she screamed at the

THE OLD GLAMOUR

gray walls and broke out in savage laughter. She ran back and forth in the little room, at a loss how to give vent to her rage.

"What's the matter?" Mrs. Jennings' uncombed head peeped in at the door.

"Oh, nothing!" said Anna. "I've got a bad toothache, that's all!"

"Wait just a minute, my dear," puffed the glib neighbor. "I've got some stuff in a bottle that'll stop that in no time at all!"

Oh, if Mrs. Jennings and her bottle would only blow up together!

"It's better now, thank you, never mind, never mind!" Anna cried after her, but in vain.

When Anna was finally rid of her kindly neighbor, she went to the telegraph office and sent a dispatch to her husband:

Shall not come. You do not need me.

ANNA.

Anna was grateful now to her husband for his former rebuffs when she had wanted to join him on his incendiary tour through the state, because they furnished her with a good excuse to retaliate, now that she could not possibly obey his brusque command. The scenes of Waterborough rushed into her mind: the squalid, ill-smelling inn, the hovels swarming with barefoot, dirty children, the wild parades with the grating band, the speeches— How could she make speeches now to the mob—poisonous speeches cursing the capitalist oppressor? How could she even listen to John's bloody bombast? She shuddered as if she were feeling, all at once, the touch of her husband's rough hand.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

She could not write for the *Brotherhood* any longer. Straightway from the telegraph office she went to Kovalsky's tenement and was met by his beady-eyed wife.

"How d'ye do, Mrs. Bruce," Olga greeted her jovially. "What's the news?"

"Mrs. Kovalsky," said Anna coldly, "I've come to tell you that I'm not going to write for the *Brotherhood* any more."

"What!" The beady eyes were ablaze. "What'll Ignatz say to that! Why not?"

"I feel that I can't do it so well now," said Anna. "My heart is not in it any more."

"Well, where is your heart, then?" Olga exclaimed, and Anna started.

"Oh, I'm tired of it," said Anna feebly. "You'd better look for some one new. I've used up all my ideas."

"It ain't your ideas we're after," Olga returned. "Who'll get the news from Bruce?"

"He can send it to you," said Anna, glad to shake off her odious duty altogether. "I'll tell him right off."

Then Anna wrote to her husband that he should send the news henceforth to the Kovalskys instead of her, because she did not want to write for the *Brotherhood* any more, that she would explain why after the strike was over, and that meanwhile she wished him and his cause the best success.

This letter she mailed as soon as she had left the snarling Olga, and walked home with a lightened heart, relieved, as it was, from a false and detested duty. Anna knew, nevertheless, that this move was hazardous, and exposed her still more to her husband's wrath and the danger of his inquisition. She bought a paper from a newsboy and read it in the car.

THE OLD GLAMOUR

NO HOPE FOR SETTLEMENT OF JAMESTOWN STRIKE

GREAT PARADE PLANNED

JOHN BRUCE MAKES FIERY SPEECH ON COMMON

So much the better! As Anna knew John, he would not let his domestic worries distract him from his demagoguing life, and he would not trouble her with challenging letters until the crisis in the strike was well over—unless, indeed, he should swoop down upon her himself one day, and as the master force her to follow him. Horrified at this imagination, Anna could do nothing but hope that the strike would grow more riotous, so that the leader could not be spared.

Hoping and waiting were now the only contents of her days—hoping that John would stay away, and waiting for Kenneth to come. Her routine housework she loathed more and more, so that the very sight of a dust-cloth gave her disgust, and from the neighbors she fled to roam about uptown streets, looking at shop windows, to stroll in the park, and even to taste again the joy, long missed, of seeing a play at the theater from the passive side of the footlights.

One night, about a week after her refusal to join her husband, when Anna came home from a solitary ramble, she found a letter from Kenneth, who announced that he would take a few days' vacation at the end of the week, if she were willing to see him. If she were willing! Anna laughed merrily to herself, as she wrote back a sprightly letter of welcome.

From that evening on, Anna went to bed early and slept late in the morning to shorten the tedious days till

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

the jubilant Friday night of Kenneth's arrival, when she would meet him once more in the Plaza Hotel and then go with him to the theater. Friday night came at last, and the moment came when she gave Kenneth her hand in her accustomed gracious way, although she looked keenly into his radiant eyes to detect any possible shade of pity or—even that was possible!—of secret contempt.

"Anna!" he said only, but the frank welcome of his blue child's eyes put to flight all her lurking doubts. In that instant she resolved never to mention of her own accord her husband and the life he had imposed, but to play the exhilarating game of her life as if John Bruce and the rest had been only an evil dream. And she asked him about Washington, and how he liked the new minister from Persia.

At the theater, as she passed by a mirror in the hall, Anna caught a glimpse of herself in her glistening rose gown, as she turned round gaily toward Kenneth and whisked her spangled fan, and the charm of her old life won back touched her suddenly, like the strain of a gay, old melody long unheard.

"'The Slipper of Madame Carnot' sounds promising," said Anna, glancing at the program, when they were settled in the third row from the stage.

"A true French comedy," said Kenneth. "In Paris I thought it was brilliant in its way—sparkling dialogue, intricate situations, intrigue——"

"Laughter and a light touch!" said Anna. "By all means let us not be serious!"

She laughed up at him gaily, as if she would defy all the seriousness of her life.

"No, not for a moment!" Kenneth replied, and this time his smile was sphinx-like.

THE OLD GLAMOUR

While Anna was applauding the witty first act that had been played with considerable dash and grace, she thought of *Eleonora*, the sober, heavy-spirited heroine, and failed to grasp how she could have played night after night in that puerile melodrama. Mr. Estrello, Mr. Valentine, Miss Floyd, Miss Flanagan, and the rest paraded through her mind, an ugly and ludicrous assembly, except for the sad-eyed Lucy. Poor little Lucy was still playing her youthful part and traveling over the country with the company who bullied her, while she herself, Lily Spangle—

"You are pensive!" Kenneth interrupted her reverie. "Remember you are not to be serious."

"Oh, to be sure, forgive me!" Anna exclaimed. "Un-invited meditations——"

And for the rest of the night in the theater she no longer thought back, but merely listened and bantered and laughed, till the curtain had dropped on pacified families and reconciled lovers. Then came the spirited supper hour, back at the hotel, when they talked the play over, and thought out their pleasures for Kenneth's too short stay. Although the season was over, there were enough animated parties in the room, and the Hungarian orchestra played its waltzes gaily enough to make a fit setting for Anna's mood. At last they played "The Blue Danube."

"That's just what I was thinking!" laughed Anna.

"The Beautiful Blue Danube!" Kenneth responded. "I'm glad your thoughts were waltzing! Do you always think in music?"

"Dirges sometimes," said Anna. "Oh, but I forgot—I mustn't——"

"Let us see the last Viennese operetta to-morrow!"

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

Kenneth suggested. "It's a bright, jolly thing, 'The Duke's Honeymoon.' The tunes are not trite at all. Shall we?"

Anna consented, and rose when "The Blue Danube" had bubbled away. This parting at midnight, to descend, as it were, into a nether-world, was disagreeable.

"I cannot bear to let you ride home alone to-night," Kenneth declared. "Won't you let me escort you?"

"You had better not," said Anna reluctantly, for the thought of Kenneth at the foot of the narrow stairs to her tenement offended her like a blemish on her bright evening.

"Do let me!" Kenneth insisted. "It goes against my sense of chivalry to leave you here——"

After all, it was dark, and Kenneth would not see all the squalid details of street and house; moreover, perhaps he would love her the more if he saw the prison that still kept her away, at least in part, from the realm where he was treading in light-hearted freedom.

"You may!" said Anna finally, as if she were bestowing a favor.

When she was dashing through New York in a taxicab with Kenneth talking cheerfully at her side, Anna wished that they would never reach their grimy destination, and the nearer they came to her home, the more ardent was her wish. But the time came when the cab stood vibrating noisily in front of her house, and Kenneth followed her up the doorsteps.

"This is the house of Cinderella!" she said bitterly.

"That makes it a palace in my eyes," Kenneth replied, and accompanied her into the hall.

Two doors opened, one from below on the right, one from upstairs on the left. Two heads popped out, one

THE OLD GLAMOUR

belonged to Mrs. Rassowitch, one to Mrs. Jennings. Two mouths were wide open in wonder, two pairs of sleepy eyes suddenly bright from drinking in scandal with relish. Anna's reputation was gone forever, and no explanation would bring it back.

A shadow of irony and surprise flitted over Kenneth's face.

"Go!" she whispered. "A thousand thanks! Tomorrow——" She barely gave him her hand and waved him off with the other. Then she flew upstairs and, ignoring Mrs. Jennings completely, rattled at the keyhole of her own tenement and locked the door even before she had lit the candle. Never again would Kenneth escort her home!

The next morning when Anna passed Mrs. Jennings on the stairs she encountered, instead of the expected hail of questions, only a glowering look of reproach! Ah, Anna understood. Her neighbors were brewing up a fine concoction for her husband on his return. Had they not stared at her new suit with suspicion, had they not wondered how she spent her days outside of the tenement? There was no choice now but between despair and reckless laughter, and should Anna be crushed by a bundle of slouchy washerwomen? No—she would rather laugh till her laughter rang through the whole house and made the gray walls shake!

Only a few hours more and she would meet Kenneth in town. They would lunch together, then drift into some *matinée*; and to-night the Viennese operetta! So it would go on till the dreary day of Kenneth's departure. That her exquisite pleasures must end, Anna dared not think while she talked gaily with Kenneth of anything but the future, while they saw life not more romantic

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

than their own mimicked on the stage, and listened to sprightly music. Each single moment she clasped like a pearl, precious in itself, though the necklace was torn.

On Sunday afternoon, when Anna was still a little dazed from the whirl of delights and the late hours of the day before, she was strolling with Kenneth across the green, fragrant park toward the Metropolitan Museum.

"After waltzes and repartee," she said to her companion, "good old paintings are cool and restful."

"You are beginning to be serious, after all," Kenneth replied.

"Oh, no, not serious," said Anna, with a playful sigh. "Only touched with a pleasant melancholy."

"Do you remember when we looked at pictures together last?" asked Kenneth, slowly and solemnly.

"In the Kaiser Friedrich Museum——?" Anna responded, and faced Kenneth, who looked at her meaningly with a smile of ironic melancholy. The reproach in his smile was not lost on Anna: how haughtily she had triumphed over him that day before the calm, ageless masterpieces, how cruelly she had watched his pain! And scarcely more than a year later—was she not sunning herself in his gracious will to forgive and pity, was the peace of her spirit not at his mercy?

Through the Museum Anna walked soberly, for her light-heartedness had fled. The somber-colored, but heartily alive portraits by Frans Hals, the minute Teniers, a golden-brown Rembrandt, a glossy Van Dyke, and the melancholy, velvet-dark Velasquez' made Anna believe that she was back in Europe, away alike from the duties and the frivolities of a settled life, seeking high thrills in the sanctuaries of old masters. Gratefully she saw

THE OLD GLAMOUR

that Kenneth was thoughtful and seemed to share her reverent mood. It was not until they stood before the large, conspicuous picture by Gabriel Max called "The Last Token" of a girl imprisoned in a wild lion's cage, looking up with a resigned but mournful glance while a rose just thrown down lies at her feet—not until they had looked at the picture silently for a minute, that Kenneth tossed off a sneering "Sentimental!"

"Sentimental it may be," said Anna gravely, "and I never liked it before, but it appeals to me to-day. It seems as if I must soon be encaged in a lion's den myself——"

"Oh, but there shall never be a last token for you," Kenneth assured her eagerly. "There shall be tokens without end."

"But no amount of tokens can set me free," said Anna bitterly, whereupon Kenneth made no reply.

The light, careless mood of the last two days was surely gone, and somber misgivings stayed like wreckage on a beach at low tide. The diplomat beside her never tried to turn aside the mournful trend of her spirit, but followed it like a discreet accompaniment, never out of time. To-morrow Kenneth had to leave on the midnight train, and of the grayness that would follow Anna dared not think.

"Let us see more pictures to-morrow!" he said before they parted in front of the Museum. "Some of the new exhibits—— And to-morrow night must be the finest night of all. What shall we do?"

"I want to hear music," said Anna, "some real music!"

"If we could only hear opera together once more!" said Kenneth. "But the season is over——"

Then they decided on the Philharmonic Concert for

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

their last night together, and Anna went home with one more golden night gleaming on her horizon.

While they were looking at modern pictures the next day and lunching downtown and strolling through the streets that were gay and bright with spring attire, a cloud hung over Kenneth and Anna.

"I am coming again as soon as I possibly can," said Kenneth. "And often, very often——"

"And meanwhile——" She was on the point of saying, "I shall be boiling cabbage and sweeping my kitchen, when you are banqueting and dancing with the ladies of the capital." But she could not and would not, even now, allude to her lowly life away from him, lest his memory of her be blemished by ugly pictures.

"Meanwhile," Kenneth finished her broken utterance, "I shall be longing for you everywhere—all the time——"

Anna shrugged her shoulders and shook her head. What could she do with his longing? What would it all lead to in the end? If John should come back—but of that she would not speak, no, not on this last precious day!

Not until she heard the players of the great orchestra in Carnegie Hall tune their instruments in a wilderness of sounds did the black cloud lift from Anna's spirit, and she read the program with pure delight in the two hours to come. Tschaikowski's "Pathétique" led up to a beautiful symphony of Dvorák, half plaintive, half wild.

"Oh, why must symphonies end?" Anna exclaimed, when the last chord had faded.

"I suppose because it is complete in itself," said Kenneth pensively. "Like temples, and marble statues, and jeweled rings——"

THE OLD GLAMOUR

"Like every beautiful episode in life!" said Anna.

"If you will have episodes!" Kenneth returned. "Episodes end, but life itself goes on and everything in life that is not foam."

"That is easy to say," Anna sighed, "but hard to believe! Now we are going to hear 'Isolde's Love-Death'! Do you remember, Kenneth?"

"Remember!" Kenneth exclaimed. "I see you now, leaning your elbow on the railing of the box and listening with parted lips and your eyes afire—— And afterward, how gay you were, how inspired! You said to me then: 'You may even call me Isolde!' Do you remember now?"

Anna could not answer, for the rich, solemn flood of music was beginning to rise. Tristan and Isolde! The music was uttering at last the anguished meaning of all the hushed and stifled voices in her soul. In the music were all her dark forebodings, her remorse.

When the music was over, Anna opened her eyes and looked at Kenneth. His face was tense, as she had seen it only once before.

"Anna!" he cried. "Isolde!"

"Oh, Kenneth!" Anna moaned, "if it could all be changed!"

Kenneth seemed to be staring at something distant, or, rather, something deep down in the mines of his memory.

"We drank the love-potion that time," he said, as if to himself, "but there was then no *King Mark*——"

"No," said Anna remorsefully, "no *King Mark* at all—that time! It was all my fault."

"And why—why did you do it?" asked Kenneth, in a rare excitement. "It was only a year ago——"

"Oh, Kenneth!" Anna cried. "I didn't know then what I was throwing away! I was mad: I wanted some-

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

thing quite different, something to be afraid of, something—oh, I have had it since.”

Anna's mouth twitched, and her words were broken by a sob.

The piano solo that came after the intermission Anna scarcely heard except as a rhythmic background to her storming thoughts, and when it was finished Anna started, suddenly and tremulously aware that the end had come of her last night with Kenneth. There was still time for Kenneth to help her into her coat, still time for them to walk slowly through the crowd out of the hall into the more crowded vestibule, and then——

“May I to-night——?” Kenneth pleaded.

She knew that he meant if he might escort her home to-night, but Anna sadly shook her head. Not since the first, awkward homecoming escorted by Kenneth had she allowed him to accompany her to the tenement, and she would not have her last moments with him spoiled by the neighbors' insolent intrusion.

“Besides, you would miss your train,” she said wistfully, for the dread of her loneliness was seizing her already.

“I hate that train,” Kenneth replied. “If it weren't for my career I should stay here altogether——”

“Ah, but you have a career!” said Anna bitterly. “And I wish you glory in it.”

Kenneth beckoned to a cab, and it was time to part.

“Thank you—thank you!” she whispered feverishly.

“Good-bye!” Kenneth kissed her hand, as he was wont to do last year, in the days of her triumph, and the old glamour thrilled her once more with all its power to enchant.

The cab door was slammed, and Anna speeded away

THE OLD GLAMOUR

into the darkness. Two blocks from her tenement house she stepped out and walked home, so as to slip into the house unobserved. But she noticed, as she approached it, that there were lights in the first and second story windows. Could Mrs. Jennings and Mrs. Rassowitch still be awake? Hardly had Anna entered the house, when both Mrs. Jennings and Mrs. Rassowitch rushed out of the latter's tenement. They rushed at Anna, and yet, when they stood before her, they nudged each other as if each wanted the other to break some horrible news.

"What is the matter? Speak out!" Anna cried.

"Your husband's back," Mrs. Rassowitch broke out. "He's been waitin' for you ever since eight o'clock—he's been askin' all over the house where you was——"

"He's hoppin' mad," Mrs. Jennings panted nervously. "He's just ready to——" and she stopped with a guilty look on her pale, hideous face.

"Ready to kill me—eh!" Anna cried, and turned her back on the quaking woman.

It was all clear to her in a lightning flash. Mrs. Jennings had given John malicious accounts of her mysterious absences, and especially of the first night when she came home with Kenneth. It was all clear to her, and although she was trembling from head to foot in terrible apprehension, she saw herself and Kenneth suddenly in the eyes of a mean gossip and the vulgarity of her plight filled her with a disgust that made her faint.

She opened her kitchen door, and John stood before her, pale and awful in his rage. He said not a word when she entered, but closed the door behind her, and turned the key. Never before had she been so afraid of her husband.

"Anna!" said John Bruce, with subdued anger and the

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

masterful air of a righteous judge. "Why didn't you come to Jamestown when I called you?"

"Because I thought I couldn't be of any use—I couldn't make speeches and lead strikes any more. Besides, you didn't want me at the time when I offered to come, why should I——"

"Enough!" he cut her short with a snarl. "Why did you stop writing for the *Brotherhood*?"

Anna was all hateful indignation and desperate fear. What did it matter now what she said?

"Because I loathe the *Brotherhood* and the cause and all your rubbish!" she cried wildly, and recoiled as if she expected John to strike.

But her husband stood immovable; only hate gleamed in his dark eyes, like the terrible flash of swords.

"Traitor!" he said hoarsely. "Traitor to your cause, and traitor to your husband!"

"What do you mean?" Anna challenged, though she knew that all was hopeless.

"With whom have you been to-night?" he roared at her. "With whom have you been yesterday and the day and night before, and the night before that? With whom—I ask you!"

"You've been listening to Mrs. Jennings' gossip about your wife," answered Anna, with a sneer.

"With whom—I ask!" John thundered.

"With an old friend of mine," Anna replied, with an effort at calmness, "whom I knew when I lived with my father. He came to New York and he has been taking me to the theater and talking about old times—why not?"

John was silent for a moment and pierced her with his stern, despising glance, so that she dared not stir.

THE OLD GLAMOUR

"Who bought you those clothes?" he said at last, slowly and hoarsely, in words charged with hate.

That was too much!

"You brute!" Anna screamed. "I bought them myself."

"Liar!" said John grimly. "You haven't got the money—it's that fellow——"

"Oh—oh!" Anna groaned and staggered against the wall. "I'm innocent," she whispered, but her voice made hardly a sound.

"Go out of my house!" he commanded, and unlocked the door.

All at once, like a wild creature set free, Anna panted out of the room, down the stairs, out into the dark street, and ran and ran, till her husband's house was out of sight.

"Free! Free!" voices were clamoring within her. What did she care now if John believed her guilty or not, now that she no longer stood before him trembling for her life! She would never see him again—she was free!

Exhausted, she leaned against the cold wall of a house and panted heavily. A lonely man slouched by her, and across the street a group of drunkards were singing as they reeled along. Anna was all alone and homeless in the night.

"Where shall I go?" she asked herself, and shuddered at the horror of staying in the street all night. Though she carried her purse with her, she would not be taken in at midnight by a good hotel, and to a disreputable one she feared to go. Kenneth, for whose sake she was cast out in the street, was riding luxuriously in his parlor-car, perhaps dreaming idly of her! She leaned against the

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

wall, limp and worn out, alone and friendless at midnight in the big, black city—an outcast! She had no friends— Oh, the horror of her plight! Where Ruth's aunt lived she could not remember, and the old prude would be horrified; the Kovalskys despised her; the Cranes—oh, yes, the good, kindly Cranes! To them she would drag herself and beg for shelter!

So Anna hurried along for ten minutes or so, tired and half faint, but goaded by despair, till she reached the tenement house where she had lived when she had first met John Bruce. The house door was open, and with a final effort she ran up the steep stairs in the dark and knocked at the Cranes' door. She had to knock and knock again and bang at the door with her fists. Would they never wake? At last she heard drowsy voices, then slouchy footsteps. The door was opened, and Mrs. Crane stood white and ghost-like in the doorway, with a candle in her hand. Anna felt her strength give way.

"Mrs. Crane!" she cried, breathless and faint. "Dear Mrs. Crane, take me in! My husband has thrown me out of his house in a rage! Please take me in for the night! Don't let me stay out in the street!"

"Anna Bruce!" gasped the frail, white woman, and her voice was music to Anna. "Come in, do come in, you poor, poor child!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE SNEER OF THE WORLD

ANNA was lounging in the quiet, sunny writing-room of a small, genteel uptown hotel, with magazines on her lap which she did not read. This was the second forenoon since that frightful day at the Cranes when she had tossed on Kate's bed all the morning worn out and trembling at the least noise as if it were her husband's footsteps. In the afternoon of that same day, when she had dragged herself to the bank and to the nearest stores to buy some clothing and a suitcase so that she might be taken into a hotel, Anna had seen John Bruce in every tall, broad-shouldered man at a distance, and each time her heart had seemed to stand still. And ever since she had been safe on this little island of gentility, Anna had not gone out at all; nor had she done anything else all day, but to pace up and down her room in a wearing restlessness or to stare out of the window and wonder what would become of her poor life.

She must be divorced! To stay in the fetters of this marriage was death! But Anna dared not see John Bruce again—besides, he was surely back in Jamestown heading a parade! No doubt John had cast off his wife like an old garment and, now that he was unencumbered, had plunged back into his savage cause, without remorse, without a thought of her!

Anna had not yet written to Kenneth, for, although her terrified spirit fled from her husband and lingered

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

with him, a strange timidity held her back. How could she tell him of her husband's suspicion—what could she say? Above all, what could she expect of Kenneth until she was divorced?

So there was nothing to do but wait, while blank hours of lead dragged on and weighed her down. Anna clasped her hands tightly and sighed. Would this day slouch on like yesterday without a glimmer of hope?

The window was open and the warm dusty air blew in, while the click of heels on the pavement, the rumble of wheels, the grunts of automobile horns, and the blurred voices of chatting passers-by jarred on her ears. Newsboys were screaming:

"Extry, extry! All about the big strike!"

What was that? Anna started to the window.

"John Bruce killed— All about the big strike!"

Anna darted out of the house on to the street and ran after a newsboy. When she had clutched the paper in her hand she dared not look at it till she had shut herself up in her room.

JOHN BRUCE KILLED BY SOLDIER'S BAYONET

DIED MARTYR'S DEATH, THROWING HIMSELF
ON SOLDIER'S WEAPON

Friends Say Bruce Had Planned This Way of Dying for
His Cause Immediately on His Return
from New York

Anna fell dizzily against the wall and shut her eyes: it was all rushing back to her mind now, in a flood, that ardent talk with John in Waterborough when he had told her about his bold, inspired idea of throwing himself for his cause on the point of a bayonet.

THE SNEER OF THE WORLD

"John!" she had cried—— Oh, she was hearing her own alarmed voice again! "John, you have a wife who would die of grief. You have no right to die while I am living. Promise me!"

And John had answered—how she had loved him then!—in his firm, solemn tone:

"No, I won't do it, because I have a wife!"

Now he had done it, now he had plunged into death, because his wife——

Murderer! Murderer! Voices were shrieking within her. Was it her fault? Had she murdered John Bruce?

Every word of the newspaper story she read with a gloomy greed, of the riot that began with the stoning of strikers by thugs and strike-breakers, of the soldiers' shooting, of John's shouting: "Don't think of your life! Think of the cause!" and his plunge on to the bayonet.

"John!" Anna called wildly into the air. Then he had loved her to the last, after all! He had cast her out in a righteous rage because she had been too small for him, the hero. Anna had been a hero's wife! The magic night when she had stood with John in the hushed gloomy street and, trembling before him, had worshiped him as her master, touched her again with its wonder. How great he had been then, how much a hero! And he had stayed a hero, and he had been a hero in his death.

Anna had no tears for her husband, but there was a wound somewhere in her spirit, a wound poisoned with the sense of guilt. She sat down on her bed and buried her face in her hands for a long, long time.

But meanwhile, crushed as she was by remorse, a joy was fluttering in her heart, fluttering and spreading its wings and rising to the front in her bewildered thoughts.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

There was no obstacle now between her and Kenneth! She jumped up and ran wildly about the room. Kenneth, Kenneth could come now; there was no more need to wait!

Yet to telegraph to him now, to have him come before her husband was buried, would be too brutal! The indifferent silence of the hotel, moreover, broken by trivial noises and insipid chatter, seemed outrageous on the death-day of her husband, and in her contending soul remorse rose uppermost once more.

So Anna went out on the street and bought herself a long, black coat and a hat with *crêpe*, and then rode to the headquarters of the Brotherhood. Why she turned to the Brotherhood that she had deserted, she could not clearly tell; perhaps it was a last sense of duty to her husband born of a keener sense of guilt; perhaps because she wanted to hear solemn voices and see mourning faces on this serious day!

Over the door of the Brotherhood's office there was a drapery of black *crêpe*. Anna trembled like an intruder as she walked into the little office where Paul Riley, the three Kovalskys, and eight or ten of the Brotherhood were talking in low voices. Olga was the first to see Anna with her beady, hateful eyes, and she nudged Anna Kovalsky, who turned round sharply and gasped: "Mrs. Bruce!"

A murmur of "Mrs. Bruce!" passed along the small band. Ignatz and Olga stared at her with hostile, contemptuous glances, Anna Kovalsky with an earnest look of pity in her big, dark eyes. The others seemed to shrink from her, and only Paul Riley gave her his hand with a forced formality. What right had these clumsy people to scorn her like a traitor? After all, John, for

THE SNEER OF THE WORLD

whom they were mourning here, had been her husband and had loved her ten times more than all of them together! Why had she come here at all? But she must say something——

"Mr. Riley," she asked. How strange and uncertain her voice sounded here! "Have you any news beyond what's in the papers?"

Paul Riley shook his head. "No, mum," he replied.

"When are they going to have the funeral—do you know?" Anna asked further, and it was uncanny to be asking a stranger about her husband's funeral.

"To-morrow," Paul Riley replied abruptly, "at eleven in the morning. They're going to have a funeral procession."

"Where will he be buried?" Anna whispered.

"In the burying-ground outside of Jamestown."

There was nothing more to ask.

"Thank you, Mr. Riley!" she said, and turned to go.

At the door Anna Kovalsky rushed to her and seized her hand violently in an outburst of pity.

Anna smiled sourly on the flushed, moist-eyed Polish girl, and left the room. Just as she was closing the door she heard some one hiss: "Traitor!"

No, she did not belong there among the mourners for her husband! Nor would she, the traitor, go to Jamestown and march in the funeral procession with the fierce, growling mob and join in their dirges! Then Anna recalled how the forebodings of John's death had saddened her at the time of Maria Gonelli's funeral procession, how she had feared for her husband. And now——!

On her return to the hotel, Anna flew to the writing-desk to write out the draft for her telegram to Kenneth. At first she hesitated between "John Bruce has been

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

killed" and "My husband is dead," but she decided finally on:

John Bruce has been killed. Come after to-morrow to Hotel Raymond, Madison Avenue.

ANNA.

It would be hard to wait so long; but she must not see Kenneth until her husband was buried!

Would she receive an answer from Kenneth to-night? He was always prompt, and at four o'clock in the afternoon the page-boy brought her the dispatch.

Shall arrive Saturday morning to assist.

KENNETH.

To assist—what did Kenneth mean by "assist"? Anna puzzled all the evening over this answer. Of course, he supposed that she had been living in her husband's house till his death; he could not and never should know that Bruce had cast her out.

Besides, when Kenneth should come and they would be engaged as they might have been a year ago when she was ten years—no—a century, younger, smoothly and blissfully engaged like any simple, young people, then this whole year of strife and ardor and suffering would seem like an evil dream. With this jubilant thought Anna, exhausted as she was, fell asleep, with it she consoled herself all the gloomy day of her husband's funeral, and with it she awoke on the day of Kenneth's arrival.

After a hurried breakfast, Anna sat down at the window of the little writing-room, which was deserted so early in the morning, and watched for Kenneth. The morning paper was in her lap, but she dared not look at it, lest the news about the funeral procession for her

THE SNEER OF THE WORLD

husband should taint the freshness of her spirits with which she wanted to welcome Kenneth. To welcome Kenneth! Willfully she would forget that she was anything but a light-hearted young girl waiting for her lover who was coming to bring her the engagement ring, for her gay, brilliant lover!

There he was coming down the street! Anna checked an impulse to run to meet him, and waited in the room with a queenly air, as she had often waited for him in Berlin, only not haughty to-day, but exuberant and thankful.

"Kenneth! Welcome!"

Anna stepped forward to meet him, but started back: Kenneth's face was as cold and sober as if he had come to a funeral. Bewildered, Anna could not utter a sound. But Kenneth seized her hand and said solemnly:

"Dearest Anna, you have had to suffer so much!"

Anna stared at Kenneth, speechless. What could he mean? Did he suppose, although he knew how she had groaned under the weight of her marriage, that she was mourning for her husband after all! Had he guessed her guilt, the remorse that on the death-day of her husband had rekindled some of her old admiration for John Bruce? No, all this Kenneth, who had never seen John, could not know or guess. Was it, then, the solemnity of death that made him thus reserved, and checked the natural free utterance of his love by a considerate discretion? Oh, with her Kenneth need not play the tactful diplomat, after such long and patient waiting he had a claim on her love!

"Kenneth!" she cried jubilantly. "Kenneth—we are free!"

All at once Kenneth's face was like ice; then his lips

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

twitched and his eyes, usually so bright, were darkened by a gloomy look of anguish. Anna was alarmed and all her flood of joy was cruelly checked.

"I adore you, Anna!" Kenneth exclaimed passionately. "I never stopped keeping all my love for you from the moment you refused it. Though I lost sight of you altogether and never heard a word from you for months, I held your image with me all the time. After I saw you again in New York and knew you were within reach, the fragmentary meetings with you were torture all the while because I was always dreading their end——"

"What is it, Kenneth?" cried Anna, excited to the limit of her patience. But Kenneth went on in the same vibrating tone:

"I loved you all the more for your suffering, for the hard life you had to lead; your misfortune was a halo round your head in my eyes. Anna, I tell you all this so that you will surely know how great my love is and how faithful! You cannot conceive of the pain I am suffering this minute—but I must tell it—the sooner it is said the better. Anna, you see, I have my career——"

"Ah, your career!" Anna gasped. She suddenly felt dizzy, and leaned against the table.

"I am my father's only son!" Kenneth pleaded. "He has set all his pride in me; so have his brothers. From the start I took more pains with my work than the other attachés of my age and, till I met you, I had no other absorbing passion than my career. After I met you I worked for you, till you refused me. I have the prospect of being given a minister's post at a younger age than most men—— Anna, I cannot give it all up now!"

"Give it up?" Anna echoed faintly, and stared at him with a mad, cold glance.

THE SNEER OF THE WORLD

"Forgive me!" cried Kenneth. "I have tried to ignore it, I have tried to forget it. I have tried to reason it away. But this is the cruel truth. My career would be spoiled if I married the widow of a labor leader!"

Anna reeled to the sofa nearby and fell onto it, stunned. Vaguely she felt that Kenneth was bending over her and heard him repeat, "Forgive me!" several times as if from a great distance.

All at once, after a long, blank silence, she heard a burst of wild laughter. It was her own laughter! Loud, wild, and diabolical it rang on and on as if it never would end. Was that really her own laughter, or was some one else laughing at her?

Kenneth was trying to seize her hand, but she snatched it away, and warded him off with the other.

"Leave me alone!" she was snapping.

"If you ever should need me, Anna," Kenneth was saying at the door, "I shall always be at your service."

He was stepping forward again, she thought, and then stepping back again, if she saw rightly, and then calling, "Good-bye!" and rushing out of the door.

Then she was alone—and so cold, quite frozen! After a while a little, white-haired lady came tripping up to the magazine table, looked up and started when she saw Anna as if she had beheld an apparition. Was Anna a maniac that people should be frightened at the sight of her?

With a sharp effort she jumped up and ran up the stairs to her room. There she threw herself on her bed and sobbed and cried a flood of tears. She had not really cried for months, it seemed, years! What queer things tears were, how warm on her cheeks, on her ice-cold hands! She would cry on forever!

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

She had sometimes cried like this as a child at home. Oh, at home! Her father was all alone there now, in the big, empty house. He would take her now that she was homeless.

"Father!" she cried, clasping her hands as if she were clutching a beam of hope. "I am coming back to you, I am coming home! See, I am so tired—so forlorn!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER

ONLY a few more hours and she would stand on the threshold of the library in the Manchester house and watch him muse in his low armchair, and she would call quietly, as if she had never been away: "Father!"

Anna leaned back her head against the Pullman chair and looked absently out of the window. In two hours she would reach Boston in time to rush to the North Station and catch the late afternoon train to Manchester-by-the-Sea. She had guessed that her father would have moved to the seashore earlier than usual, because he was in mourning for Aunt Sarah, and, therefore, would not miss the city in the evening; and when she had asked her banker for her father's present address, the reply had confirmed her guessing.

Poor Aunt Sarah! Would the canary bird in his grove of geraniums still be chirping his song all alone? Who would hover about the house, stroking a cushion here, drawing back a curtain there, with a pink sewing-bag dangling at her arm, mouse-like and benign? Anna thought of her lonely father who had no one to welcome him when he came home after the day's fatigue, no one to talk to all the long dreary evening. He had no one to work for now, no one to give his hard daily toil a meaning; like herself, he was bereft and must be desolate.

"Oh, my father, how lonely we both are!" a voice was

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

clamoring within her, above the noise of the train, and in her mind she flew to the chair where he sat brooding in his library and confessed her whole year of suffering, since she had left home for the hospital, confessed it all in one breath—even the outrages of the last week, her husband's cruelty and—yes, even that!—Kenneth's rebuff. Then it would all be over and her father would forgive her now that she was in broken spirits and a widow, and they would live together in peace, as if she had stayed with him always. Peace! Anna could not remember when she had last known peace, and the thought of it was balm. How slowly the train was rambling on! She wondered if ever a runaway child had longed more to come home and rest; her heart was beating swiftly in the joy of expectation, and the mind picture of her father in the library at twilight was like a beautiful image that seemed to draw her onward.

Anna knew that she must not look back lest the horrors of the last week seize and overwhelm her once more. Like Orpheus coming from the Underworld, she would lose her joy if she looked behind. So she was looking forward, only forward!

A little white-headed man with dim eyes, an acquaintance of her father, passed by Anna.

"How do you do, Miss Borden!" he said, with a quaint bow, when he had recognized her tardily.

How sweet was the sound of that name! Evidently this nebulous, little Mr. Parker had not read about her in the newspapers and had been spared gossip about her. The sound of "Miss Borden" made her feel indeed that she was back in her old world.

As the train neared Boston, her heart beat more and more violently, and when she found herself really in the

THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER

South Station, she felt the excited dizziness that she had known on first landing after a rough passage at sea. She had been living her bitter life only five hours away, yet those five hours seemed like the barrier of an eternity. How often in former years had she come back from New York as from a pleasant little excursion, and to-day, starved and bleeding from the thorns of the wilderness, she was fleeing to her home for shelter and the bread of life.

A half hour later, Anna was looking out of the window of the local train to Manchester-by-the-Sea at the light green apple trees that were beginning to bloom, and the ribbons of light-blue sea that shone in the twilight beside the new tender green of the fields and lawns. How beautiful the North Shore was to-day in Anna's eyes, unsurpassed by any famous coast, with its rugged boulders, its tangles of shrubbery, its hilly pastures and the open sea! This was her home, and she had left it, like the prodigal son, to serve strangers and to feed on swine's fare, and to come back humbled to her father's house.

"Manchester next!"

Anna's heart leaped, and with trembling hand she snatched her suitcase and rushed to the door, unwilling to waste a moment in her eager home-coming. The strong, salty sea wind blew into her face as she skipped down the train steps and hurried into one of the little carriages at the station.

"To Mr. Borden's!" How that sounded!

The trees and shrubs all seemed touched with an effervescent freshness, and the hyacinths and tulips in the gardens seemed to hold in their tints, still delicate and brilliant in the dusk, the perfumes that were lost in the sea breeze.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

The sea! The sea! At a turn of the road it lay before her, no longer hidden by houses and trees, a serene film of light blue touched with a glimmer of rose that reflected the deep rose of the sunset clouds. This was the beloved view that she used to call her own from her balcony—the island beyond, the rocks on the left, the strip of sand and the rest all sea—sea!

There was the house, at last, white and dazzling against the rich purple and rose of the sky, and beautiful with the lawn in front and the budding lilac bushes at the gate. The brass knocker at the door shone like pure gold. When Anna rang the bell, the clarion sound of it vibrated through her like a wild, jubilant call: "I am coming, I am coming home!"

A strange servant opened the door and looked with some astonishment at the wind-blown woman in black who stepped right into the hall with her suitcase before she had asked for the master of the house. Anna put down her suitcase and breathed a deep sigh of relief. The light walls, the polished floor with the golden-brown rug, the stairs with the white bannisters that led up to her own dear room were real, quite real.

"Is Mr. Borden at home?" she asked the staring servant, who replied sharply:

"Mr. and Mrs. Borden are at dinner."

Was the creature mad?

"What do you mean?" Anna shouted, and without waiting for a reply ran into the dining-room.

"Oh——!" There sat Mrs. Hamilton at Aunt Sarah's place, and Natalie at Anna's own, and her father was talking cheerfully with both!

Anna felt dizzy and had to clutch the sideboard to keep from falling; she was faint and could not give forth a

THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER

sound. But her father rushed to her and took her into his arms.

"Child! Anna!" he was crying. "How pale you are! You are faint! Come, sit down and rest!"

He drew up a chair for her, and Anna sank into it limply. In spite of her father's earnest greeting, Anna's heart was frozen. Oh, was there ever a more disappointed home-coming, a more cruel fate than hers!

The two women had risen reluctantly and sat down again, distressed by the intruder.

"James, bring a glass of brandy immediately!" ordered the new Mrs. Borden.

"No, thank you!" Anna whispered, instinctively refusing what that hateful woman offered. She gave herself a jerk and tossed back her head, determined not to give a further show of weakness.

"You look worn out!" said her father, anxiously leaning toward her. "Have you had much hard work? Have you been ill? Tell me——!"

Anna shrugged her shoulders and smiled dully.

"You see," she said, looking down at her black dress, "I am a widow."

"I know," said her father, in an embarrassed voice, "you have had a hard, hard life. I wish I could have spared you all——"

There was a silence, during which Mrs. Borden whispered with the butler, who began to set a place for Anna. Both Mrs. Borden and Natalie wore black in artificial deference to poor Aunt Sarah, who had always in her timid way disliked the Hamiltons, and who would have shuddered in her lifetime had she dreamed who would be her successor as the mistress of her brother's house.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"Anna," her father began ceremoniously, "you have a new mother now, and a sister."

"Yes, I see," said Anna, and smiled blandly.

These two suave women, always so much at ease, had not a word to say, and glanced at each other furtively, as if each were waiting for the other to speak first.

"You must tell me everything, Anna!" her father went on unsteadily. "All your experiences, all your hard times—not now, of course, but when you are rested!" he added, because Anna twitched nervously.

Not a word would she tell her father beyond the meager outlines of her life! Her ardent longing to confess was chilled and the father whose loneliness she had yearned to share now seemed a strange man, stranger than when she had left him against his will.

"I hope you will make yourself quite at home here," said Mrs. Borden, at last, with a sugared amiability that smacked of the effort it had cost.

"Thank you," said Anna lamely. "I hope I shall not be any trouble."

"As you and Natalie were old friends," said Anna's father, "it is only a step to become new sisters."

Anna smiled sadly. What a *bon mot* at this dreary family party!

"What do you say, Natalie?" she could not refrain from asking, with a malicious curiosity.

"Oh, why not?" said Natalie, with unfeigned condescension. "It'll be very interesting for me to hear all about your life—it's so unusual."

"So eccentric, you know!" said Anna, with a bitter smile; and there was silence again.

When dinner was over, Anna asked to be allowed to rest.

THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER

"Certainly!" gushed Mrs. Borden. "I'll take you up to your room."

"Oh, I can find it myself!" cried Anna, and ran upstairs to her own beloved room.

She was just going to open the door, when Mrs. Borden cried up from the stairs:

"No, no, that's Natalie's room! You must have the blue room to the right."

Treachery! Now the balcony—her kingdom—was Natalie's! The cherished view of the wide sea that had been all her own was Natalie's! Crestfallen, she slipped into the blue guest-room and threw herself on the bed.

There she lay in a numb state and could not grasp why grief upon grief should have fallen on her of all poor creatures! What, after all, had been her crime, that she should be thus crushed and bruised at every step? Job-like, her soul cried out in its wounds and challenged explanation.

She would like to have taken her suitcase and run out of the house, away, anywhere! But she was too tired— After all, the bed was cool and downy, the room with the blue wall paper, the ivory-colored maple furniture, soothing to the eyes, and the murmur of the sea more restful than the din of streets; and Anna did not have the strength to turn vagabond again!

After a while she forced herself to go downstairs, merely to say good night, and surprised her father and the Hamiltons, who were talking in the library, evidently deep in an absorbing topic.

"Sleep well and long, my child," said her father, as he kissed her good night. "You are welcome home!"

There was not too much welcome in Mrs. Borden's sneer, which was not meant for, but did not escape,

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

Anna's watchful eyes, nor in the upward curl of Natalie's lip, and it seemed that even her father's voice was unnatural and unsteady. And when Anna walked out of the library she felt pursued by three pairs of eyes, two very hostile and one doubtful and puzzled.

In the long stretch of sleepless night the murmur of the sea and wind was doleful like a dirge. Through the window Anna saw blackness, only relieved by the twinkling at the lighthouse and the liquid gilt poured down by the slender new moon. Anna felt as if she were sailing on a boat far out on the ocean, on a great, gloomy boat that bore no other passengers save her father and his new family. And she fell asleep with a strangling desire to leap overboard into the cold, black sea——

It was ten o'clock in the morning when Anna woke up, and her breakfast was brought into her room with the message that Mr. Borden had already left and that Mrs. Borden and Miss Hamilton asked to be excused because they had an early engagement in town. Nothing could be more welcome to Anna than a solitary morning, when she might roam about the rooms and forget the aliens that had invaded her father's house, if only the name respectfully, reverently pronounced by the lips of the servant-maid, the misplaced, usurped name, "Mrs. Borden," had not made her shiver with a chill that would last all day.

First of all Anna slipped into her own room, where the photographs and silly trinkets that Natalie had strewn about disgusted her, and stepped out on to the balcony. There it was intact—her own precious view! The bright sunlight was gleaming on the ripples of the deep blue water and turning them to gold; every rock on the island was visible in the clear air and the little fisher-

THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER

man's dory that was sailing toward it and the schooners at the horizon stood out sharply against the bright blue sky. On the beach below the water was murmuring at low tide. Anna stretched out her arms and sighed. If she could only be an oyster in its shell, oblivious in an endless torpor to all except the murmur of the sea! Oh, for a few minutes she could forget her sorrows, drown them in the beauty of the sea, but then the least noise of the door swinging in the light breeze would make her start and remember Natalie. Anna wondered if to Natalie's cold, steely eyes the sea was just as blue, the sunlight on the ripples golden, and whether Natalie could hear the wistful murmur of the tide.

From her own room Anna went to Aunt Sarah's, to mourn for her there, under the geraniums. But horror! If Natalie's capture of her own room was impertinence, this surely was profanation: the old geraniums had been thrown out, and a profusion of fuchsia, cyclamen, and crimson rambler roses was blooming there instead; the little canary bird was gone, and in its place hung the unwieldy cage of a parrot, who screeched as Anna came near him: "Natalie, Natalie!" On Aunt Sarah's sewing-table lay packs of cards, and on her bureau that was once so prim and quaint, there was now a display of perfume bottles and lorgnettes. Anna ran out of the room and slammed the door, lest the ghost of Mrs. Borden pursue her. But as she walked about the house it seemed as if in every nook her stepmother had cast an evil spell. So Anna fled out of doors, where the sea wind swept away every unwelcome human trace.

Fortunately, Mrs. Borden and Natalie stayed away for lunch, and it was not till tea-time that they came back.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

"I'm sorry we had to leave you by yourself," gushed Mrs. Hamilton, "but you see, Mrs. Bruce, Natalie and I had made this fitting appointment weeks ahead, and I had to see after some things in the afternoon——"

Oh, yes, yes, yes! Anna wished Mrs. Borden would have "some things" to look after all day and all night. And so the preposterous woman chose to call her "Mrs. Bruce" instead of Anna, as she had called her a year ago! Anna was satisfied that it should be so, but, nevertheless, she would show that her ears were not blunt.

"Oh, Mrs. Hamilton," she said, with a relish, as she emphasized the name, "don't trouble about me at all!"

"Mrs. Borden, you mean," said the piqued woman, with eyebrows haughtily raised.

The ceremony of afternoon tea, to which Anna had been unaccustomed now for so long was accompanied by a fluent conversation between Natalie and her mother about their day's shopping and their plans for the dress-maker, while Mrs. Borden's little pet poodle whirled about the room and whipped the legs of the table with his tail.

But when her mother had gone to her room, Natalie came over to the sofa where Anna sat—not too near, just to the other end of the sofa!—and said, in a tone of benevolent condescension, through which Anna could discern her burning curiosity:

"Now, Anna, tell me something about your life."

Anna shrugged her shoulders and laughed.

"I have had about nine lives like a cat!" she replied. "Which do you want?"

Natalie looked sheepish, and answered, after some affected hesitation:

THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER

"Perhaps you will tell me something about your life on the stage."

"Oh, on the stage!" exclaimed Anna. "That's so long ago I've almost forgotten about it. Oh, well, the stage means hard work rehearsing, hard work acting every night and two afternoons a week, hard living, not much glory, not much pay—— Well, would you like to go on the stage?"

Natalie scowled, and after a while she asked:

"Did you meet your husband on the stage?"

Oh, what ignorance! Did Natalie suppose that labor leaders played the parts of footmen in melodramas? Evidently Natalie wanted to ensnare her into a confession of her disgraceful life, but Anna, by evasive answers, led her inquisitor a lively chase.

Finally Anna's father came home and greeted her with an awkward cordiality—awkward, because he seemed to be aware of his wife's and stepdaughter's presence.

"You are looking much better to-day," he said. "The sea air will do you good."

After dinner—a strange formal dinner, during which Anna was either silent or answered her father's polite questions—he asked Anna to come with him into the library for a "good talk," and Mrs. Borden and Natalie discreetly stayed away.

"Now, Anna!" he said, with an air of coming to the point, when he had settled opposite her in his accustomed armchair. "It is about time that you should tell me about—about your life since we saw each other last."

"That was in Providence!" said Anna dreamily, for the angry parting with her father in the Providence hotel now seemed decades ago; and there he was sitting oppo-

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

site her now, outwardly reconciled to his renegade daughter, but surely not forgiving.

Anna told him the bare outlines of her life since the parting in Providence, coolly, as if it were another's life that she was contemplating from without. But Kenneth she omitted altogether. How could she bear to hear her father say triumphantly: "If you had only obeyed me at the outset and accepted Kenneth a year ago, you would not have been cast on the street by a vulgar husband, you would not have sunk fathoms below the distinguished man whom you once scorned and who is now sneering at you in utter contempt!" No, the secret of Kenneth's sweep into her married life and its cruel consequences would stay locked deep in the dungeon of her soul!

Mr. Borden's brow grew more and more sinister as he heard Anna's tale, and when she had finished, he looked at her for some time gravely.

"Are you—are you very much grieved by the death of your husband?" he asked finally, and his unsteady tone betrayed that he was puzzled.

Of all questions this one, so impossible to answer! Anna was silent and thought. After all, since her love for Kenneth had been frozen into hate, she had begun to forgive John, who had died in his despairing love of her. John had died a hero, John had died faithful, and though he had been cruel, he had been so only from a perverted sense of justice.

"I loved my husband," she answered, at last, with lingering emphasis on each word.

Anna's father turned away a perplexed, somber face that showed how hard it was for him to grasp that his child could have had such a love.

THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER

"Perhaps you don't want me in your house," said Anna, because she could think of nothing else to say.

"Why, Anna!" her father exclaimed reproachfully. Then followed a painful silence.

There was a knock at the door and Mrs. Borden swept in with a pack of cards.

"Shall we have our auction now?" she asked sweetly, and, turning to Anna, she added: "You don't play, I remember—do you?"

When Mr. Borden was by, his new wife refrained from addressing Anna as "Mrs. Bruce," but she could not force herself to call her "Anna."

"Natalie!" Mrs. Borden called shrilly into the hall, and when Natalie came in, Anna slipped out onto the veranda to meditate alone.

During the days that followed, lonely meditations were the chief contents of Anna's hours. Natalie and her mother, who at first studied how to rid themselves of the unwelcome intruder by inventing engagements, urgent letters to write, and important tête-à-tête conferences, soon learned that it was easy for them to avoid Anna. So she would wander for hours over the rocks and beaches and inland through the woods and along country roads. Sometimes she would lie in her favorite nook on the same rock where she had first begun to weary of her sleek living, and where she had fallen in the night and brought upon herself the illness and the nurse who had pointed to a new path for her life. While Anna traced the changing colors of the sea from morning until nightfall, and watched the tide creep in and ebb again, her contemplation circled always round her own grievous past, a past still so young and fresh, like a newly dug grave.

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

It was the secret that weighed on her so heavily, the unconfessed secret of Kenneth's part in her married and widowed life, and as she pondered it over and over, her hate for Kenneth grew—for Kenneth, who was perhaps motoring with an ambassador's wife or complimenting a senator's daughter at an insipid tea, while she was lonely and burdened with sorrow—and with it a strangling sense of guilt. Had she not looked for Kenneth after the banquet to the ambassador, John Bruce would be living and leading men to victories.

"Murderer, murderer!" she would hear in the murmur of the sea, in the blowing of the wind, in the rustling of leaves. In the house she started at every footstep, as if she were being pursued, and in the night she would wake up with fright. The burden of her secret was growing heavier every day. Soon she would break down under it altogether.

Meanwhile she was lingering on, an unbidden guest in her father's house. What else could she do? Besides, she was out of the way of his new family as much as possible, even in the evening when the others played cards and she escaped upstairs. But still Mrs. Hamilton was calling her "Mrs. Bruce," still Natalie drew back as if contaminated whenever Anna touched her by accident in passing her by; still Natalie was asking sly questions to find out the hoped-for scandal in Anna's life; still Anna's father looked offended when she gave Natalie a sharp reply.

Now that the days were growing warmer toward the middle of May, the summer colonists were beginning to people Manchester-by-the-Sea, and in her rambles Anna would come across an acquaintance.

"How do you do, Miss—Mrs.—um!" would be the

THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER

cordial greeting. "How nice to see you back! Are you going to stay here some time?"

"I don't know yet how long," would be Anna's reply. "Manchester is as lovely as ever! Isn't the sea wonderful to-day?" And she would escape as swiftly as she could.

One day a stranger, an elaborate woman who had been calling on Mrs. Borden, was just going to leave the house when Anna came into the hall.

"This is Mrs. Bruce who is staying with us," Mrs. Borden introduced Anna. "Mrs. Bruce from New York."

"Indeed!" said the feather-bow. "That's very nice. Isn't it beautiful here?"

When the door had closed behind the caller, Anna laughed aloud. So Anna was "Mrs. Bruce from New York"—anything rather than a stepdaughter who brought disgrace upon the house!

As Natalie began to receive callers, they had a way of being ushered into the room where Anna was not, and to drink tea on the veranda just at the time when Anna happened to be strolling on the beach. It was too bad, Anna thought, that the family was in mourning, else she might taste the pleasure of being sent into the kitchen during the dinner parties. She was really wondering, besides, how long her stepmother could stand a retired country life.

One Sunday after she had been studying the "Social Life" columns in the Sunday paper with painful accuracy, Mrs. Borden looked up and said pensively:

"George!"—so the woman actually called Anna's father—"George, don't you think we might begin to ask

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

a few people just to an informal *en famille* dinner some time soon?"

"Certainly, my dear," Mr. Borden replied. "Whom did you have in mind?"

"Well"—Mrs. Borden's stout face lit up, and her voice had a smug, satisfied tone. "I was thinking the Obediah Jones and perhaps the Roger Goodrichs and, let me see——"

"The P. P. Jacksons, mother," Natalie suggested.

"Yes, the P. P. Jacksons. I owe them something! That's a good idea," Mrs. Borden declared. "Then we might have your nephew Frank for Natalie—— You, I suppose, won't care to take part." She looked at Anna with a sickly smile, but Anna stared at her coldly, and answered:

"No, thank you, I am in mourning."

This remark was meant to pique, and it had the intended effect, for Mrs. Hamilton started and scowled and looked down at her black dress. But the effect did not stop there. Anna's father laid down his paper and shot at her a long, dark, reproachful glance that pierced her to the quick. So her own father was reproaching her for resenting an insult! When all were reading again, Anna slipped away and ran down to the beach, scrambled over the rocks, without a hat, though the sunshine was dazzling, on and on, restlessly, without aim. And as she ran, a resolve was ripening in her mind: it was time to end this life at home. At home, indeed! The glance of reproach from her father had confirmed what she knew long ago, that she was the blemish on his new domestic bliss. She had been waiting for some kind of outbreak, but the days of scenes were over—alas, she had had enough for a lifetime in one single week last

THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER

month!—and the glance of her father had been more eloquent than a torrent of words. And, then, the daily small stings from his wife and Natalie!

The prisoner in China, she thought, on whose bare head a drop of water fell every second—always on the same spot, drop after drop—till he died of madness, was tortured no less cruelly than if he were stoned or burned at a stake. Like such a prisoner Anna felt, and the torture would soon make her mad.

But where could she go? Of course, she could live anywhere in some obscure summer hotel, and nurse her grief, alone with her burdening secret. That was a dreary outlook but, as there was no hope anyway for her poor, faded, shriveled life, it would be better to leave than to linger on; for she would at least be out of the way. Yes, she would go to-morrow, at the beginning of a new week, it did not matter where, only out of her father's house!

As Anna walked back in the cool of the late afternoon, her heart was a great blank, and she smiled blandly at Natalie, with the limp sense that nothing made any difference anyway, as long as she was going away to-morrow. Till late in the evening she sat on the veranda with her father and his family, even joined in the conversation and laughed gaily, and wished them good night most amiably, then went to bed like a lonely wayfarer who does not know where he will lay his head the next night. She would not announce her departure and stir up excitement, she would merely slip away and write to her father after she had left.

So the next morning she came down to breakfast as usual, just as her father was looking through the mail.

"There's a letter for you, Anna!" he said. A letter

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

for her! Who could have written to a forgotten outcast? Her father gave her a sealed letter with a wilderness of an address. "Care of Mr. Estrello, New York," written in a big, boyish hand, was crossed out and Anna's Manchester address written by a woman. Besides, there was the name of Anna's hospital in New York with some stamped remarks from the post-office to the effect that the letter had once been opened, as the addressee had not been found, and returned to the sender. And in the labyrinth Anna traced the hand of Benvenuto, Benvenuto Lugini! Tears shot to Anna's eyes: there was still one faithful soul in the dreary, cruel world, who had not scorned or forgotten her, even though she had forgotten him in the turmoil of her life.

Anna could not read the letter here while the others sat round her and stared: so she kept it till her father had gone, and she went out on the rocks to read:

DEAR ANNA:

Come to me before I die! You are the only being I love. You have done for me more than any one ever did. I want to thank you before I die. They say I am very ill. I am glad to go, but not before I have seen you again.

BENVENUTO.

One serene cherub soul was worshiping her like this, unaware that his beloved was eating dust! One believed in her. Then there was no doubt that she, the forsaken, must fly to that one.

Poor Benvenuto was dying! Anna shuddered. What if he should have died while the letter was on the way! She rushed back to the house, up to her room, packed her trunk, telegraphed to a New York hotel which she remembered as opposite the hospital, studied the time-

THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER

table, ordered a carriage from the station—she would not use Mrs. Borden's motor-car for her clandestine journey—left a note to her father saying that she was suddenly called to New York to see a dying friend, and would stay away indefinitely, then rode off, while Mrs. Borden and Natalie were gossiping with a neighbor. Anna saw them rocking on the neighbor's veranda as she rode by, and laughed.

Two hours later she was riding in the train over the same route on which she had come three weeks ago, trembling with repentance and longing for home. Her home had failed her, like everything else in her life, and she had found no kind hand to lighten the burden of her secret still unconfessed.

It was not with any hope for succor that she was riding back over the same route now, it was only to answer the call of another tired soul, whom life had failed. Even the lame and the blind! But the poor, lame soul adored her— Oh, if Benvenuto should die while the train was creeping on!

CHAPTER XV

THE MISTAKE

ANNA walked into the hospital with awe, as if she were walking into a cathedral. When she entered the superintendent's office, Miss Thayer's matter-of-fact, calm face was electrified by surprise at sight of the renegade probationer.

"Miss Borden!" she exclaimed, and the reproach in her voice did not escape Anna.

"I must see Benvenuto Lugini instantly," Anna clamored, indifferent to all but the dying boy. "He sent for me—I have hurried from Boston to see him to-night——"

"The time for receiving callers is past," said Miss Thayer, with cruel tranquillity.

"But he is dying!" cried Anna indignantly. "He may be dying this minute, while I am pleading with you. He must not die before he has seen me."

With a condescending gesture the superintendent told Anna to wait in the reception room, while a nurse would be sent to find out whether Benvenuto was awake and able to see her. Reluctantly Anna, who had much rather have rushed up the stairs to the familiar ward, sat down and waited while the ticking of the clock made her feel as if the pendulum at every swing were hitting and bruising her soul.

As she waited, she saw former colleagues flit by the door, among them Agnes Leighton, the saint—but Anna

THE MISTAKE

felt only indifference. And suddenly—could it be true? the face of Clare Norwood appeared and vanished again. Clare Norwood! An idea shot through Anna's mind that if she had never met Clare Norwood she would have taken a different course, that if she had not met Clare Norwood she would not be here forsaken by all but a dying boy. Was Clare working in the hospital again? Anna would have run after her at any other time, but now everything seemed trivial but Benvenuto. At last a strange nurse came and said that Lugini was asleep and that it would be wrong to wake him.

Anna was downcast.

"Couldn't you possibly?" she pleaded. The nurse shook her head.

"You can come to-morrow morning after nine," she said, by way of consolation.

"How is Lugini?" Anna asked impatiently. "Is there much danger?"

"He may live a few days longer," said the girl, with the dispassionate tone of the nurse who watches daily by the borderland between life and death, "but we are prepared for his death every day. The priest is expected to-morrow morning—these Italians have it that way, you know, when they are going to die."

"He may be dead by to-morrow!" cried Anna bitterly, and left the hospital.

"Benvenuto!" she cried out to herself on the street, regardless of the staring passers-by. "Oh, Benvenuto!" How could she wait till to-morrow? If while she was crossing the street, while she was ascending in the elevator to her room in the hotel, while she was idly staring out of the window, if— She could not bear the thought. Yet there was nothing to distract her; it was

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

the only thought that her mind could hold, the only thought worth thinking, the only flame in her chilled life.

She could not sleep this anxious night, she would watch at the window if the dim light in Benvenuto's ward were growing brighter. Oh, but the night would be dreary and wearing and the evening long and solitary. Silence was weighing on her, and would crush her soon. How could she break the silence? As she looked down on the street and saw throngs surging up and down in the twilight, it made her dizzy to understand that she was all alone in New York. She could not to-night, as on one other night of anguish in her life, fly to the Cranes, for they would never understand why she had left a home of earthly splendor. But she must break the silence, this silence fraught with the shuddering surmise of death.

Oh, for a friend in the wilderness—a wise friend, now that she was crushed and destitute! Destitute! A vision was conjured up all at once, a vision of Ruth Gregory as she stood in the doorway of the Home for Destitute Children and smiled at her serenely, as if she were foreseeing how Anna would go astray. There was a friend, and a wise friend, too! Without further reflection, Anna telephoned to the house of the aunt with whom Ruth was living, but when she heard Ruth's low, melodious voice, she was suddenly at a loss what to say. How much did Ruth know of her life? Surely no more than that she was a widow.

"This is Anna Bruce. I'm back again—I went home for a while——" was all that she could utter. "I want to see you to-night."

Thereupon Ruth invited her to dinner, but Anna declined, unequal, as she was, this night of all nights, to

THE MISTAKE

mundane conversation with the aunt. So she decided to go to Ruth's after dinner, and begged that she might see her alone.

The ride to Ruth's house was long, the streets of New York ugly and noisy, as if every passer-by were having a quarrel with his neighbor. And Anna wondered if in this discordant, restless throng there was one soul as dejected as hers.

The house of Ruth's aunt, Miss Gregory, on Fifty-fifth Street, looked depressingly common-place, and the maid who opened the door had a jarring voice. Everything that Anna saw or heard to-day was either jarring or depressing.

She could not even put on a smile as Ruth came down-stairs serenely but shyly, with the reserved air of one approaching a widow but recently bereft. In Ruth's big, brown eyes a light of astonishment kindled at sight of Anna.

"Don't be afraid of me, Ruth!" were Anna's first words. "No wonder you are startled. I am only the wreck of myself——"

"Poor Anna!" Ruth began, in a melodious note of pity, but Anna laid her hand on Ruth's arm.

"Don't 'poor Anna' me!" she exclaimed. "Don't pity me! Or, rather, pity me more than you have ever pitied the most destitute child in your Home. Only don't pity me, as you are doing, for being a widow——"

"How, Anna——?" Ruth stood puzzled.

"Oh, Ruth," Anna cried, "I am an outcast. My only friend but you is dying to-night. I have come to see if you are still faithful. Or will you forsake me, too?"

Ruth stared at her with bright wondering eyes.

"Come up to my room," she whispered. "And you

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

must tell me—— I can't believe yet that you are Anna Borden!"

Anna followed Ruth upstairs into a little, secluded study with pretty, flowered curtains, a fragrant pot of heliotrope on the little white desk, a profusion of books in the low bookshelves and strewn on the table and the broad cushioned window-seat. To Anna this room looked as if a creature with a grief as wild as her own had never disturbed its tranquillity. They sat down on the window-seat and Ruth looked up at Anna with intense eagerness to hear.

But Anna was still looking about the room, spellbound by the air of peace.

"Ruth—are you still quite content with your work?" she asked, in a tone of awe.

"Yes, quite content," Ruth answered, with surprise. "But what of that——?"

Anna sighed heavily.

"When I see your life and my life side by side," she said, "my despair grows still greater. Your life and my life—— Oh!"

Anna shook her head and gave a short, bitter laugh.

"Tell me the whole story of your life," Ruth begged her earnestly, "from the time you entered the hospital! I don't think I ever quite understood it. I don't think I ever quite understood why you left the hospital for the stage: you told me once, but it seemed so strange——"

"I must begin before then," said Anna. "To make you know how everything happened. No doubt it will all seem strange to you——"

Then a great power, sprung from despair, swept over Anna like a mighty wind, and forced her to tell the story of her life. She told of her romance with Kenneth in

THE MISTAKE

Berlin; of her home life at Manchester-by-the-Sea, and how it wearied her; of the impression that Ruth's ideas of service made upon her, of the long illness, Clare Norwood and her own new resolve; of the routine hospital work, and of the meeting with Benvenuto; of the triumphs and humiliations of Lily Spangle, of Lucy Crane, the key to the world of the meek poor; of the dreary days in the workshop, of John Bruce and her great love; of the Toilers' Brotherhood and the bloody strike in Waterborough, of the tenement life in New York, Aunt Sarah's death, and the slow estrangement from her husband; of her yearning for the old glamour of beauty and ease, and the coming of Kenneth and of the golden hours with the young diplomat; she told how her husband cast her out on the street, and how Kenneth scorned her like a creature too low for his stooping; she told of her homecoming to find her father's new wife and daughter, of the chill in her father's house and the burden of her secret.

The words fell from her lips without effort, almost without her will; and, when she had told all, she found that she was trembling hard. Ruth had followed every word eagerly with glistening eyes. Now there was silence.

"O, Anna, my poor friend!" Ruth exclaimed at last. "You have surely led a most unhappy life in this one year, though it was not without its glorious moments."

"Moments!" cried Anna, clasping her hands over her eyes. "Moments! That is it, Ruth! You have pierced my most vulnerable spot——"

"What do you mean, Anna?" Ruth's voice was vibrating with suspense.

"Oh, Ruth!" Anna looked up and stared ahead, as if

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

she were reading the past, line for line, like an open book. "See—all the time, throughout my career, I have been hunting moments—thrills—what you will call these sparks of experience that fly up and go out."

"I see," said Ruth eagerly. "I begin to understand——"

"It began in Berlin with Kenneth," Anna went on, and now the name no longer made her shudder, for she read her life as if it were another's. "I sought the exquisite moments with Kenneth, and never Kenneth himself. In the hospital I wanted the martyr's thrills, and when they had ceased, I fled to the stage to chase the delirious moments of triumph and applause."

"But when you wanted to help the poor?" Ruth suggested, as if she were trying to persuade Anna to be more lenient in the judgment of her own life.

But Anna shook her head.

"There it was the benefactor's thrills again!" she exclaimed, shrugging her shoulders. "And the thrill was soon crushed in the workshop. But as for the Toilers' Brotherhood—Oh, the moments there, the moments of ecstasy, of power, of martial glory! And when those sparks, too, had been put out, there was nothing left but ashes—ashes. Then came the promise of new moments, dazzling moments like the old bygone ones in Berlin—and everything went wrong."

And to Anna it seemed as if the book of her life now lay at her feet, torn into a thousand shreds.

"Yes, everything did go wrong," said Ruth with ardent compassion. "And I must bear a part of the guilt, because I helped to inspire you with ambition for a career——"

"No," said Anna, "if it had not been you, it would

THE MISTAKE

have been someone else; I was discontented at home—Oh, Ruth, what better course could I have taken than to follow your footsteps—if I only had followed them! Look at your life now in the midst of achievement and content, and look at mine in ruins!”

“Poor Anna!” said Ruth earnestly. Alas, what else was there to say?

“You love your cause,” Anna began again. “I never loved a cause; I only loved the thrills—the moments—those cursed moments! Ruth, if I had only been like you! You love your cause. John Bruce loved his cause. My husband!”

The old wound broke out anew, the fierce remorse for her guilt in her husband’s death.

“My husband was a hero!” she cried out in pain. “No one ever loved a cause more than he. And I——”

Gloomily she brooded over the vision of John Bruce, as he spurred on the striking masses.

“But there are few like your husband,” said Ruth pensively.

“Oh, but there are lesser souls,” Anna replied, unconsoled, “who love their smaller causes. Take Clare Norwood, whom I had a glimpse of in the hospital to-day. She was a nurse long before me, and she is still a nurse. And Lucy Crane is still with the Estrello Company from which I fled, although they treated her worse than the others, and me better. Perhaps Lucy will be a great actress some day, and think back of the renegade Lily Spangle with scorn.”

“Not with scorn!” Ruth interrupted.

“With pity, perhaps?” said Anna shrugging her shoulders. “Oh, I see the train of sneerers—Anna Kovalsky—how she looked at me that day after John’s death!—

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

Olga, Ignatz, Paul Riley—all, all were faithful to their cause. Only I was the traitor."

"But it was harder for you," Ruth again began to console. "They knew no other life——"

"I have no more mercy!" Anna interrupted her. "I see all so clearly now: my mistake, my great mistake!"

There was a gloomy silence, that no attempt at consolation could have relieved.

"Why, even Aunt Sarah had a cause of her own," Anna broke out again, "mild and obscure as it was. She never broke away from home; she never wearied of her genteel tasks in the house, of her charity—and she died faithful. Oh, even Aunt Sarah was loyal to her cause! But I——"

Again she was lost in sinister brooding.

"My mistake! My mistake!" she muttered in despair. "There is nothing left but remorse."

"But you are still so young," Ruth protested. "The greater part of your life is still before you."

"A great blank," said Anna. "Nothing but remorse and despair."

"Oh, but consider," Ruth went on fervently, "consider how many blessings you still own. You have youth and beauty and education. You have wealth at your disposal——"

Again Anna shrugged her shoulders scornfully.

"Above all," Ruth continued, "you have your experience behind you, and you know——"

"I know my mistake," said Anna bitterly.

"But some way to atone for it will reveal itself," said Ruth with confidence. "See, when I tried to win you for my work and you refused, that time before your marriage, I had a secret hope that you would come back

THE MISTAKE

and join me some day. Now I no longer believe that my work is the right task for you. But I do believe that you will find some new vocation——”

“I can’t believe that,” said Anna in a toneless voice.

“Oh, but I do, I do!” Ruth cried fervently.

“At least I have a friend,” said Anna and looked up at Ruth in gratitude.

It was now late in the evening, too late for Anna to return to her hotel, and she consented to spend the night in Ruth’s house. So they talked on till after midnight, when Anna went to bed, exhausted.

“Thank you, Ruth,” said Anna as they parted for the night. “Thank you for opening my eyes.”

Indeed, her inward eyes were opened wide, nor could she close her outward eyes for a long, long while in sleep. The thought of her mistake tortured her as if it were a wild beast pursuing her in the night, a griffin with deadly claws. She could not sleep. And beneath the storming of her remorse there was all the while her fear for Benvenuto, the dread that he might be dying in the same city while she lay idly tossing in her bed and despairing over her ruined life.

One o’clock struck—two o’clock struck—at last sleep overtook her. And she awoke with a guilty sense that Benvenuto might have died while she was sleeping. Yet she would not have been admitted before nine o’clock.

Fortunately, Ruth’s aunt did not come down to breakfast and Ruth understood Anna’s anxiety and silence.

“You understand everything,” said Anna. “You are my wise friend. I have only one other friend—perhaps, perhaps no more! Am I fit to go to a death-bed, Ruth, worthless and desperate as I am?”

“Yes,” Ruth answered firmly, “you are.”

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

When Anna had bidden Ruth good-bye in the doorway, she turned round once more and cried:

"If it had not been for you, I could never have lived through this last night!"

Then she hastened away to the hospital.

It was still ten minutes before nine when she entered the Superintendent's office, and her heart stopped beating when she merely whispered:

"Benvenuto Lugini?"

"You can see him in about fifteen minutes." Oh, the blessed relief! "The priest is with him now."

The priest! That meant that death was near. The fifteen minutes in the waiting-room were an eternity so fraught with fear that Anna longed to push time onward with her restless hands.

At last the nurse came demurely, formally, as if on a mundane errand, and led Anna upstairs to the ward. Oh, she need not be led there, she could find Benvenuto blindfold!

There he lay motionless and limp; he was very pale and his eyes were feverishly bright and turned on Anna as soon as she came into the room. His bed was screened off from the other patients, and on the little table beside it three candles were burning, traces of Benvenuto's final mass. With awe Anna drew near, as to someone no longer in flesh and blood.

When the nurse had left her alone at his bedside, Anna sat down on the chair that had been brought there, no doubt, for the priest.

"Anna!" cried Benvenuto. "Now I can thank you before I die!"

After all her humiliations, to be thanked so fervently made Anna tremble.

THE MISTAKE

"Don't thank me, Benvenuto!" she cried. "I have—I have not——"

"Oh, never mind, never mind!" said the boy with the smile of an old, wise man. "I can guess—you quit the Estrello Company! I thought so when the letter came back! Do you think I care? Do you think I care?" he repeated with glittering eyes. "You have done more for me than anyone ever did—you played *Eleonora* once—you were my ideal and all the people that saw you saw my ideal——"

"Oh, for your sake, I wish I had never left off!" Anna exclaimed in genuine repentance.

Benvenuto laughed.

"Oh, why?" he asked in his singing voice, and his eyes were fixed beyond her on some distant apparition. "*'Eleonora'* was not a good play—no! It was all from the outside—everything happened from the outside, you know—you understand! I wanted to make a new play—I've had it in my mind all the last month—a new play for you to act in, Anna!"

"Oh, my boy!" cried Anna, bending over the bed, overcome by pity as for a lame child who longs to climb mountains.

"The new play—in the new play everything was going to work from—from the inside," Benvenuto lifted his hand vaguely in his effort to make clear his thought. "In the new play nothing should happen just by chance——"

"What was that to be about?" Anna asked, for she saw that this unwritten play was seething in his mind, even now in this late hour.

"It should be the story of an artist who fails," said Benvenuto, and, as he spoke, a feverish glow reddened

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

his pale face. "An artist who is always racing after his ideal and never can reach it, and he dies before——"

It was Benvenuto's own story; but Anna knew no consolation.

"He cannot reach the ideal in his work," Benvenuto went on. "But there is a wonderful lady who seems like his ideal made alive—Oh, Anna, you should have been the heroine again—only this time you were first and then your likeness—But the play will never be done, it will never be begun."

Anna was silent, for she could not console him with a feeble lie, when he was facing the truth.

"Anna, it's for that play I should like to live on—Perhaps it wouldn't be a play even. Perhaps it would only be a poem—a song: the artist's life and you in a song! That's all our life is, Anna, just a song and a prayer! If it weren't for that, I'd be glad to die. I'm tired of this—" he looked down at his hands—"these arms and legs that are always so tired and my head that aches so often—soon I shan't have all that any more. I shall feel no pain, no weariness when my limbs stay behind. There I will see them all again—father, mother and my brother Angelo, all with wings—Oh, Anna, if I only didn't have to wait so long for you—if you could come with me now! What is this sick life on earth here—what is it, Anna? It is only a tired waiting for the other life. I've been a failure in this life. But I've loved my ideal and I have followed it as far as I could. I think—Oh, I believe, they will take me in up there into the light—even if I am a failure!"

"You are not a failure!" cried Anna, for beside the ecstatic boy she felt earthly and more than ever a sinner. "No, not you!"

THE MISTAKE

"Who is?" he asked mildly, as if he were pausing on his road to Paradise to help a wayfarer in distress.

And Anna knelt down beside his bed and laid her clasped hands on the cool, white sheet. It seemed as if he would fly away and leave her behind, crouching under her load, and she must beseech him to stay a moment and consider her plight.

"I am the failure!" she cried. "Oh, Benvenuto, I have never loved an ideal as you have. As I wearied of the stage, so I wearied of every task. See, I have recognized my own great mistake. I have always loved the thrill of a moment and never loved a cause; and when I have seemed to do a service, it was never for the sake of the cause that I was serving, but always for the sake of myself. My life has been a failure altogether. I am nothing now but a traitor and an outcast—I have nothing to offer but remorse. What shall I do, Benvenuto, to atone for my mistake?"

She looked up to him, as to an archangel, awaiting his judgment. Benvenuto looked away again, at first in deep thought, then in ecstasy.

"I have it!" he exclaimed jubilantly. "I know what you can do!"

"Oh what?" Anna trusted in him altogether. "Tell me what?"

"There is a convent, not far from Naples, I remember," Benvenuto began slowly, as if he were trying to hold fast a fleeting vision. "My father took me there once when I was a little boy. There were cypress trees in the garden and silver olive groves. There the nuns walked two by two, with their rosaries. I saw them from the road through the gate—they wore black and their faces were white and calm—I can see you, Anna, a nun

ANNA BORDEN'S CAREER

like those, walking in the garden at twilight: you would find peace there, peace in repentance and prayer, and you would find salvation——” The last words he merely whispered and closed his eyes.

“Benvenuto!” Anna leaned over the bed and kissed his cold hand as if it were the hand of a saint. Benvenuto opened his eyes slowly and looked into hers as if he were gazing down at her from a great height. Then he closed them again. The candle-light fell on his white face, and the fragrance of burning wax filled the air like incense.

When the nurse had glided to the bedside of the dead boy, and after a significant glance was bending over him, Anna turned away. Instinctively she stepped out on to the balcony that led off from the ward, where the patients were lying in steamer-chairs, the high, airy abode where she had first seen Benvenuto. The strong, undiluted sunshine dazzled her tearful eyes after the mellow candle-light, the vigorous breeze startled her after the warm scent of wax and the vista of the great live city was like a trumpet-blast into the solemn hush of death.

Her eye followed the broken line of sky-scrapers, the wonderful giants, against the sunny sky, and then traced the gleaming river on, on into the harbor, where, like a shadow in the distance, she discerned the Statue of Liberty. In the harbor two ponderous ocean-liners, one with two smoking stacks, one with four, and flags fluttering at the sterns, were cutting through the deep blue water, leaving trails of foam behind. Excursion steamers and fishermen's schooners, butterfly sloops and clumsy ferries were winding their ways in and out, and all were steering toward some goal—the nearest shore or the farthest continent. A challenging whistle pierced the

THE MISTAKE

muffled din of street noises and shot through Anna like a clarion-call.

Not in the nunnery, not in the shady Italian garden of olive groves to the melody of the nightingale's song would she linger in idle repentance! No, she must look forward into the sunlight and hear the whistles of boats in the harbor, street cries and eager footsteps on the pavement.

"Benvenuto, I will find salvation!" all at once a hopeful voice cried out within her. "I will find my salvation, Benvenuto—in the sunlight!"

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